

RICE UNIVERSITY  
A SENSE OF PLACE  
ARCHITECTURE IN THE FICTION OF TONI MORRISON

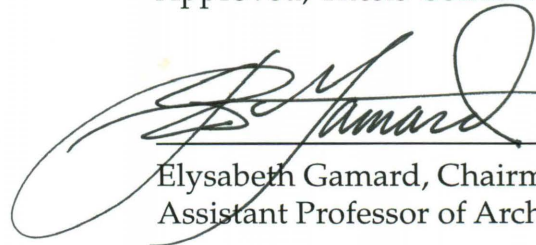
by

Nicola Joy Springer


A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

Approved, Thesis Committee:



Elysabeth Gamard, Chairman  
Assistant Professor of Architecture



David Brown  
Assistant Professor of Architecture

Houston, Texas

April, 1997

This thesis begins with a graphic exploration and analysis of Toni Morrison s fiction.

It attempts to concretize the imagined spaces of the stories as well as map the unusual and idiosyncratic details of the architecture. There is an awareness that there is an origin for her architecture in real life, however what is recounted in the stories is a mutated architecture that is a product of Morrison s memory and imagination.

Graphic and literary analysis look for the symbols and elements that are recurrent in the stories, as a way to grasp an idea of an architecture that is part of a particular and potent black fiction.



Burnt Shacks, Beverly Buchanan

If a house burns down, it s gone, but the place the  
picture of it stays, and not just in my rememory but  
out there, in the world.

Beloved, Toni Morrison



Jack Delano, Interior of House

As architect of her fiction, Toni Morrison constructs a world that hovers between reality and fantasy, history and myth. In her world, ordinary places; the shack, the storefront, the clapboard, the plantation house, undergo a transformation and a manipulation that is simple, yet carries with it an aspect of the uncanny and the surreal.

This thesis attempts to harness some of the power of Morrison's fiction, and create an architecture that uses her narrative and its qualities as its foundation.

Threshold becomes the architectural concept that links Morrison's fiction to my architecture. Doorway and staircase gain significance as recurring architectural elements; passage through these spaces is more than just crossing a plane, but an extended experience in itself. It is this aspect of delay and the thickening of the experience of the threshold that is ultimately the focus of my design for an urban bookstore.





Walker Evans, Interior,  
sharecroppers cabin

**Septo.** *"I felt a very strong sense of place, not in terms of country or the state, but in terms of the details, the feeling the mood of the community, the town."*

**Morrison.** *"Sometimes my relationship to things in a house would be a little different from say my brother's or my father's or my son's..... I clean them I move them and I do intimate things "in place" "*

taken from conversations with Toni Morrison  
Intimate things in place , Robert Septo /1976 Mass.

Review 18. 1977 : 473-89

Uncanny and the surreal in Morrison's fiction

Fantasy, the supernatural, superstition, affect Morrison's architecture as they affect her characters. What is uncanny and surreal that can be detected or imagined in Morrison's novels can be understood from the works and writings of surrealists and other artists.

Surrealism:

the principle ideals or practice of producing fantastic or incongruous imagery in art and literature by means of unnatural juxtapositions and composition.

Websters dictionary

As an art movement improperly visual and impertinently literary . Relatively inattentive to the imperatives of form and mostly indifferent to the laws of genre.

.. the unconscious in the real pg xiii

The following notes are taken from Hal Foster's Compulsive Beauty

If there is a concept that comprehends surrealism, it must be contemporary with it, immanent to its field;.....

I believe this concept to be the uncanny, that is to say a concern with events in which repressed material returns in ways that disrupt unitary identity, aesthetic norms, and social order.

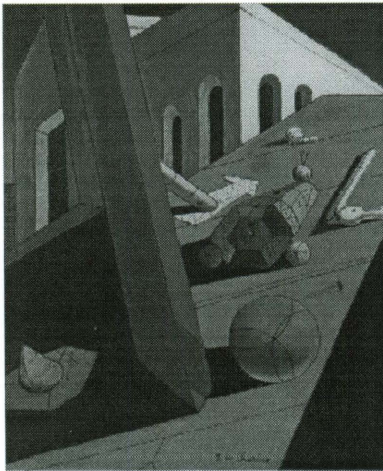
pg xvii

Everything tends to make us believe that there exists a certain point of the mind at which at which life and death. the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low, cease to be perceived as contradictions.

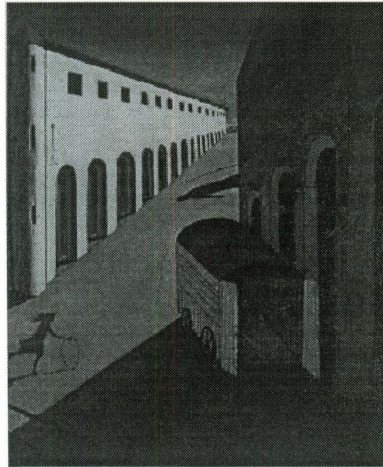
Breton "Second manifesto du Surrealisme" La Revolution surrealiste 12 (December 15, 1929)

## Seeing Uncanny

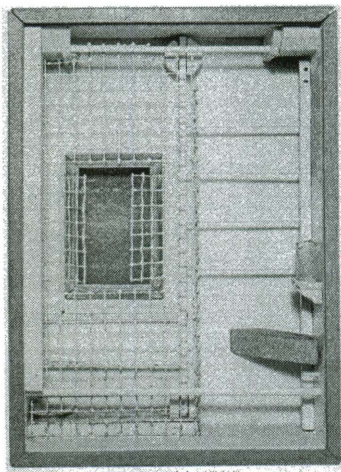
Paintings, collage and sculpture offer the visual imagery that allow an interpretation of "uncanny" and facilitate the move from the verbal concept as expressed in the stories to the visual and three dimensional as explored in this thesis.



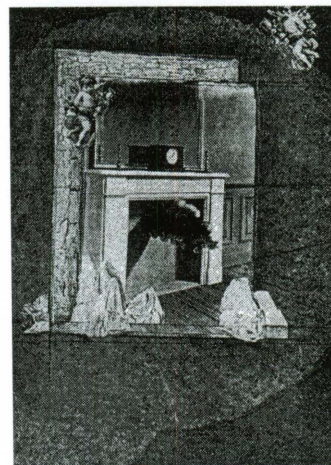
de Chirico: Evil Genius of a King



De Chirico,



James Cornell, Blue Peninsula



Magritte, Time transfixed



The marvelous

pg 20

...the subjective effects of the marvelous, its disorientation of "memory" its disruption of "identity"

What is admirable about the fantastic is that there is no longer anything fantastic: there is only the real.

Breton

the marvelous *is* the uncanny —but projected in part away from the unconscious and repressed material toward the world and future revolution.

Foster

Uncanny— immanence of death in life.

The paradox of surrealism, and the ambivalence of its most important practitioners is this: even as they work to find this point they do not want to be pierced by it, for the real and the imagined, the past and the future only come together in the experience of the uncanny, and its stake is death

pg 23

Beauty will be not only convulsive or will not be, but also compulsive or will not be. Convulsive in its physical effect, compulsive in its psychological dynamic. Surrealist beauty partakes of the return of the repressed, of the compulsion to repeat. That is to say partakes of the uncanny.

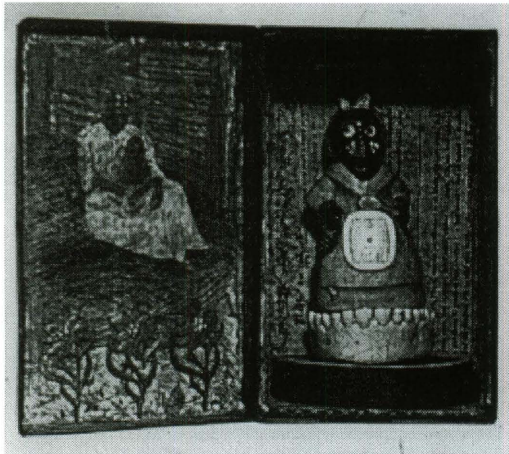
pg 190

Not only did the interior become identified with women, but interiority became associated with femininity whether understood as spiritual, emotional or hysterical.

pg 194

As the uncanny involves the return of a familiar thing made strange through repression, so aura also concerns "a strange web of space and time: the unique appearance of distance, however close at hand. In some sense then aura and anxiety share a point of origin or intersection in the uncanny, a point developed in surrealism.





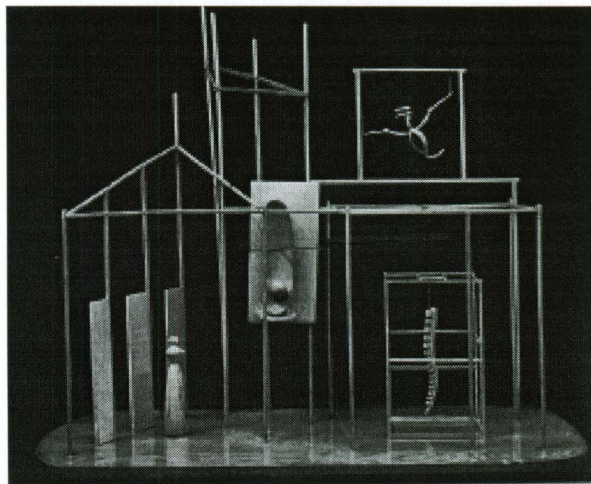
Betye Saar, Imitation of Life



Max Ernst, La Femme 100 têtes



Betye Saar, Gris a Gris



Alberto Giacometti, Palace at 4 am



#### 4 stories 4 families 4 homes

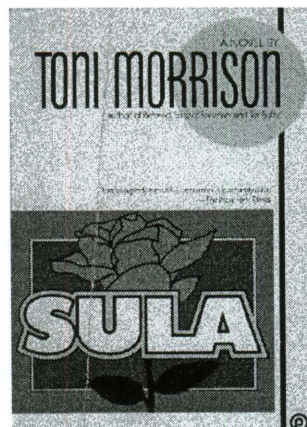
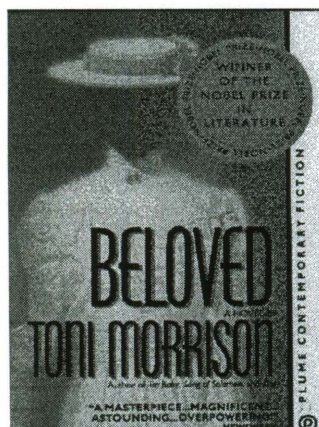
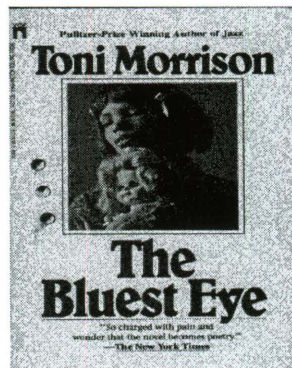
My investigation begins with four of Morrison's novels

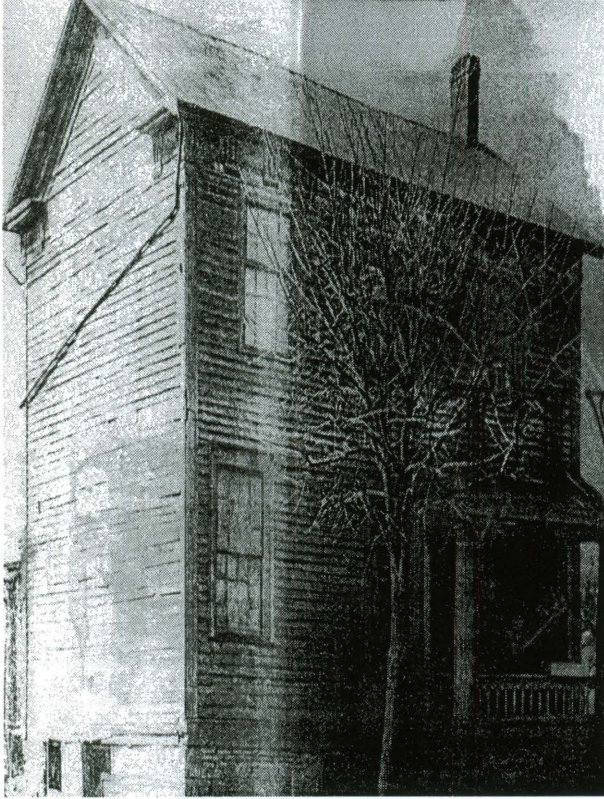
**Beloved** 124 Bluestone Road, home of Baby Suggs, Sethe, Denver (and Beloved)

**Sula** 7 Carpenter's Road, home of Eva, Hannah, Sula Peace (and others)

**Song of Solomon** Darling Street, home of Pilate, Hagar, Reba Dead (and Bones)

**Bluest Eye** Broadway and 35th street Lorain Ohio,  
home of Pecola, Sam, Cholly and Mrs. Breedlove  
Apartment above Miss Marie, China and Poland





This house he told her to  
leave as though a house  
was a little thing — a  
shirt waist or a sewing  
basket you could walk off  
from or give away any old  
time



## Notes on a Haunted House

The theme of the haunted house is a familiar one in American fiction. The intimacy and familiarity of the domestic space of the haunted house revives in the fervent imagination the dormant nightmares of under-bed-monsters and awake in our conscious adult minds the uncertainty and fear of the unknown and other worldly in what is supposed to be a safe refuge.

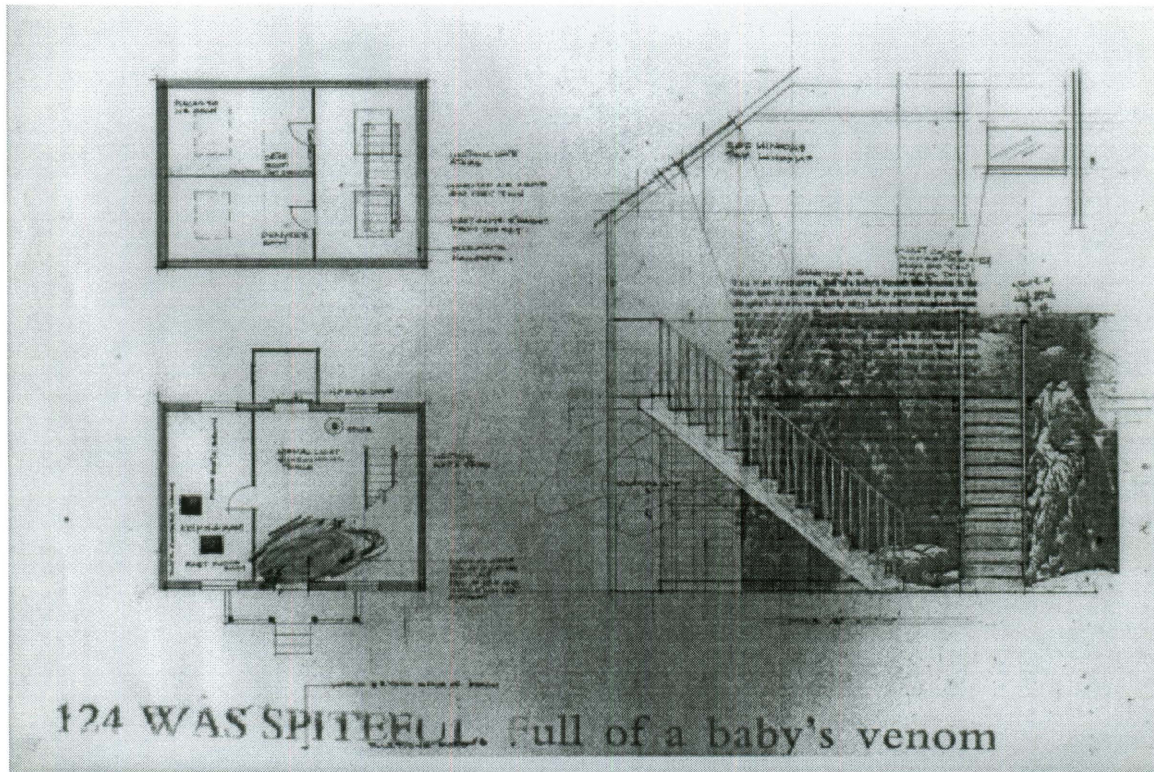
Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is retrospectively part of the gothic tradition and brings to that genre of fiction a voice that has never been heard. She also brings a different understanding of dealing with the unknown, and its potential for evil. In *Beloved* it is not met with fear. Annoyance and intolerance cause the boys to leave and allows the man to chase it away, but acceptance allows the women left behind to survive.

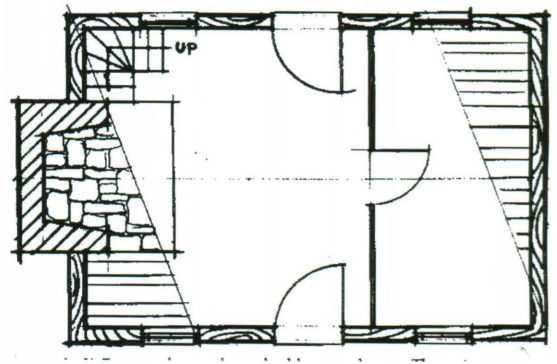
Architecturally the haunted house is as important for revealing the nature of the characters as it is for revealing itself. In Edgar Allen Poe's *Fall of the House of Usher*, the architecture in its dim gloominess seems much like the owner himself. The physical decay of the house becomes representative of the similar demise of the family and the individuals themselves.



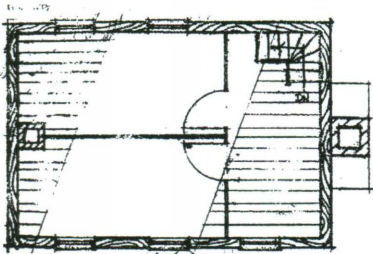
Victor Hugo, *Maison Visionée*



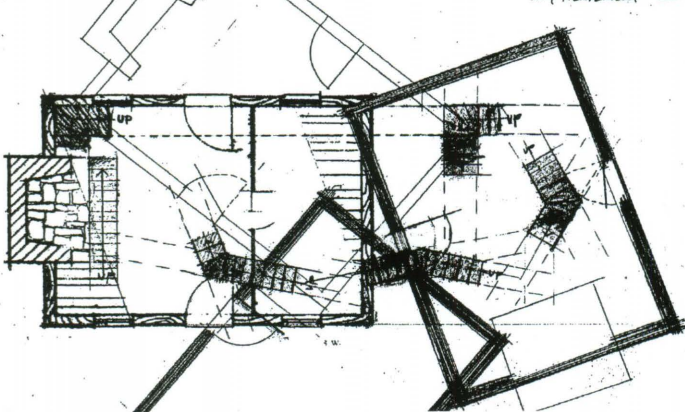








The 2nd floor. A variant plan for a two story house in which two longitudinal spaces which end had are formed by board-partitions. The rooms and hall were usually illuminated by several windows. A small chimney often served as a door.



Looking from  
penetrating feature  
built over an interior

THE PG 20.  
I WAS THINKING ABOUT  
THE 30-40-50-60-70-80-90-100-110-120-130-140-150-160-170-180-190-200-210-220-230-240-250-260-270-280-290-300-310-320-330-340-350-360-370-380-390-400-410-420-430-440-450-460-470-480-490-500-510-520-530-540-550-560-570-580-590-600-610-620-630-640-650-660-670-680-690-700-710-720-730-740-750-760-770-780-790-800-810-820-830-840-850-860-870-880-890-900-910-920-930-940-950-960-970-980-990-1000-1010-1020-1030-1040-1050-1060-1070-1080-1090-1100-1110-1120-1130-1140-1150-1160-1170-1180-1190-1200-1210-1220-1230-1240-1250-1260-1270-1280-1290-1300-1310-1320-1330-1340-1350-1360-1370-1380-1390-1400-1410-1420-1430-1440-1450-1460-1470-1480-1490-1500-1510-1520-1530-1540-1550-1560-1570-1580-1590-1600-1610-1620-1630-1640-1650-1660-1670-1680-1690-1700-1710-1720-1730-1740-1750-1760-1770-1780-1790-1800-1810-1820-1830-1840-1850-1860-1870-1880-1890-1900-1910-1920-1930-1940-1950-1960-1970-1980-1990-2000-2010-2020-2030-2040-2050-2060-2070-2080-2090-2100-2110-2120-2130-2140-2150-2160-2170-2180-2190-2200-2210-2220-2230-2240-2250-2260-2270-2280-2290-2300-2310-2320-2330-2340-2350-2360-2370-2380-2390-2400-2410-2420-2430-2440-2450-2460-2470-2480-2490-2500-2510-2520-2530-2540-2550-2560-2570-2580-2590-2600-2610-2620-2630-2640-2650-2660-2670-2680-2690-2700-2710-2720-2730-2740-2750-2760-2770-2780-2790-2800-2810-2820-2830-2840-2850-2860-2870-2880-2890-2900-2910-2920-2930-2940-2950-2960-2970-2980-2990-3000-3010-3020-3030-3040-3050-3060-3070-3080-3090-3100-3110-3120-3130-3140-3150-3160-3170-3180-3190-3200-3210-3220-3230-3240-3250-3260-3270-3280-3290-3300-3310-3320-3330-3340-3350-3360-3370-3380-3390-3400-3410-3420-3430-3440-3450-3460-3470-3480-3490-3500-3510-3520-3530-3540-3550-3560-3570-3580-3590-3600-3610-3620-3630-3640-3650-3660-3670-3680-3690-3700-3710-3720-3730-3740-3750-3760-3770-3780-3790-3800-3810-3820-3830-3840-3850-3860-3870-3880-3890-3900-3910-3920-3930-3940-3950-3960-3970-3980-3990-4000-4010-4020-4030-4040-4050-4060-4070-4080-4090-4100-4110-4120-4130-4140-4150-4160-4170-4180-4190-4200-4210-4220-4230-4240-4250-4260-4270-4280-4290-4300-4310-4320-4330-4340-4350-4360-4370-4380-4390-4400-4410-4420-4430-4440-4450-4460-4470-4480-4490-4500-4510-4520-4530-4540-4550-4560-4570-4580-4590-4600-4610-4620-4630-4640-4650-4660-4670-4680-4690-4700-4710-4720-4730-4740-4750-4760-4770-4780-4790-4800-4810-4820-4830-4840-4850-4860-4870-4880-4890-4900-4910-4920-4930-4940-4950-4960-4970-4980-4990-5000-5010-5020-5030-5040-5050-5060-5070-5080-5090-5100-5110-5120-5130-5140-5150-5160-5170-5180-5190-5200-5210-5220-5230-5240-5250-5260-5270-5280-5290-5300-5310-5320-5330-5340-5350-5360-5370-5380-5390-5400-5410-5420-5430-5440-5450-5460-5470-5480-5490-5500-5510-5520-5530-5540-5550-5560-5570-5580-5590-5600-5610-5620-5630-5640-5650-5660-5670-5680-5690-5700-5710-5720-5730-5740-5750-5760-5770-5780-5790-5800-5810-5820-5830-5840-5850-5860-5870-5880-5890-5900-5910-5920-5930-5940-5950-5960-5970-5980-5990-6000-6010-6020-6030-6040-6050-6060-6070-6080-6090-6100-6110-6120-6130-6140-6150-6160-6170-6180-6190-6200-6210-6220-6230-6240-6250-6260-6270-6280-6290-6300-6310-6320-6330-6340-6350-6360-6370-6380-6390-6400-6410-6420-6430-6440-6450-6460-6470-6480-6490-6500-6510-6520-6530-6540-6550-6560-6570-6580-6590-6600-6610-6620-6630-6640-6650-6660-6670-6680-6690-6700-6710-6720-6730-6740-6750-6760-6770-6780-6790-6800-6810-6820-6830-6840-6850-6860-6870-6880-6890-6900-6910-6920-6930-6940-6950-6960-6970-6980-6990-7000-7010-7020-7030-7040-7050-7060-7070-7080-7090-7100-7110-7120-7130-7140-7150-7160-7170-7180-7190-7200-7210-7220-7230-7240-7250-7260-7270-7280-7290-7300-7310-7320-7330-7340-7350-7360-7370-7380-7390-7400-7410-7420-7430-7440-7450-7460-7470-7480-7490-7500-7510-7520-7530-7540-7550-7560-7570-7580-7590-7600-7610-7620-7630-7640-7650-7660-7670-7680-7690-7700-7710-7720-7730-7740-7750-7760-7770-7780-7790-7800-7810-7820-7830-7840-7850-7860-7870-7880-7890-7900-7910-7920-7930-7940-7950-7960-7970-7980-7990-8000-8010-8020-8030-8040-8050-8060-8070-8080-8090-8100-8110-8120-8130-8140-8150-8160-8170-8180-8190-8200-8210-8220-8230-8240-8250-8260-8270-8280-8290-8300-8310-8320-8330-8340-8350-8360-8370-8380-8390-8400-8410-8420-8430-8440-8450-8460-8470-8480-8490-8500-8510-8520-8530-8540-8550-8560-8570-8580-8590-8600-8610-8620-8630-8640-8650-8660-8670-8680-8690-8700-8710-8720-8730-8740-8750-8760-8770-8780-8790-8800-8810-8820-8830-8840-8850-8860-8870-8880-8890-8900-8910-8920-8930-8940-8950-8960-8970-8980-8990-9000-9010-9020-9030-9040-9050-9060-9070-9080-9090-9100-9110-9120-9130-9140-9150-9160-9170-9180-9190-9200-9210-9220-9230-9240-9250-9260-9270-9280-9290-9300-9310-9320-9330-9340-9350-9360-9370-9380-9390-9400-9410-9420-9430-9440-9450-9460-9470-9480-9490-9500-9510-9520-9530-9540-9550-9560-9570-9580-9590-9600-9610-9620-9630-9640-9650-9660-9670-9680-9690-9700-9710-9720-9730-9740-9750-9760-9770-9780-9790-9800-9810-9820-9830-9840-9850-9860-9870-9880-9890-9900-9910-9920-9930-9940-9950-9960-9970-9980-9990-10000-10010-10020-10030-10040-10050-10060-10070-10080-10090-10100-10110-10120-10130-10140-10150-10160-10170-10180-10190-10200-10210-10220-10230-10240-10250-10260-10270-10280-10290-10300-10310-10320-10330-10340-10350-10360-10370-10380-10390-10400-10410-10420-10430-10440-10450-10460-10470-10480-10490-10500-10510-10520-10530-10540-10550-10560-10570-10580-10590-10600-10610-10620-10630-10640-10650-10660-10670-10680-10690-10700-10710-10720-10730-10740-10750-10760-10770-10780-10790-10800-10810-10820-10830-10840-10850-10860-10870-10880-10890-10900-10910-10920-10930-10940-10950-10960-10970-10980-10990-11000-11010-11020-11030-11040-11050-11060-11070-11080-11090-11100-11110-11120-11130-11140-11150-11160-11170-11180-11190-11200-11210-11220-11230-11240-11250-11260-11270-11280-11290-11300-11310-11320-11330-11340-11350-11360-11370-11380-11390-11400-11410-11420-11430-11440-11450-11460-11470-11480-11490-11500-11510-11520-11530-11540-11550-11560-11570-11580-11590-11600-11610-11620-11630-11640-11650-11660-11670-11680-11690-11700-11710-11720-11730-11740-11750-11760-11770-11780-11790-11800-11810-11820-11830-11840-11850-11860-11870-11880-11890-11900-11910-11920-11930-11940-11950-11960-11970-11980-11990-12000-12010-12020-12030-12040-12050-12060-12070-12080-12090-12100-12110-12120-12130-12140-12150-12160-12170-12180-12190-12200-12210-12220-12230-12240-12250-12260-12270-12280-12290-12300-12310-12320-12330-12340-12350-12360-12370-12380-12390-12400-12410-12420-12430-12440-12450-12460-12470-12480-12490-12500-12510-12520-12530-12540-12550-12560-12570-12580-12590-12600-12610-12620-12630-12640-12650-12660-12670-12680-12690-12700-12710-12720-12730-12740-12750-12760-12770-12780-12790-12800-12810-12820-12830-12840-12850-12860-12870-12880-12890-12900-12910-12920-12930-12940-12950-12960-12970-12980-12990-13000-13010-13020-13030-13040-13050-13060-13070-13080-13090-13100-13110-13120-13130-13140-13150-13160-13170-13180-13190-13200-13210-13220-13230-13240-13250-13260-13270-13280-13290-13300-13310-13320-13330-13340-13350-13360-13370-13380-13390-13400-13410-13420-13430-13440-13450-13460-13470-13480-13490-13500-13510-13520-13530-13540-13550-13560-13570-13580-13590-13600-13610-13620-13630-13640-13650-13660-13670-13680-13690-13700-13710-13720-13730-13740-13750-13760-13770-13780-13790-13800-13810-13820-13830-13840-13850-13860-13870-13880-13890-13900-13910-13920-13930-13940-13950-13960-13970-13980-13990-14000-14010-14020-14030-14040-14050-14060-14070-14080-14090-14100-14110-14120-14130-14140-14150-14160-14170-14180-14190-14200-14210-14220-14230-14240-14250-14260-14270-14280-14290-14300-14310-14320-14330-14340-14350-14360-14370-14380-14390-14400-14410-14420-14430-14440-14450-14460-14470-14480-14490-14500-14510-14520-14530-14540-14550-14560-14570-14580-14590-14600-14610-14620-14630-14640-14650-14660-14670-14680-14690-14700-14710-14720-14730-14740-14750-14760-14770-14780-14790-14800-14810-14820-14830-14840-14850-14860-14870-14880-14890-14900-14910-14920-14930-14940-14950-14960-14970-14980-14990-15000-15010-15020-15030-15040-15050-15060-15070-15080-15090-15100-15110-15120-15130-15140-15150-15160-15170-15180-15190-15200-15210-15220-15230-15240-15250-15260-15270-15280-15290-15300-15310-15320-15330-15340-15350-15360-15370-15380-15390-15400-15410-15420-15430-15440-15450-15460-15470-15480-15490-15500-15510-15520-15530-15540-15550-15560-15570-15580-15590-15600-15610-15620-15630-15640-15650-15660-15670-15680-15690-15700-15710-15720-15730-15740-15750-15760-15770-15780-15790-15800-15810-15820-15830-15840-15850-15860-15870-15880-15890-15900-15910-15920-15930-15940-15950-15960-15970-15980-15990-16000-16010-16020-16030-16040-16050-16060-16070-16080-16090-16100-16110-16120-16130-16140-16150-16160-16170-16180-16190-16200-16210-16220-16230-16240-16250-16260-16270-16280-16290-16300-16310-16320-16330-16340-16350-16360-16370-16380-16390-16400-16410-16420-16430-16440-16450-16460-16470-16480-16490-16500-16510-16520-16530-16540-16550-16560-16570-16580-16590-16600-16610-16620-16630-16640-16650-16660-16670-16680-16690-16700-16710-16720-16730-16740-16750-16760-16770-16780-16790-16800-16810-16820-16830-16840-16850-16860-16870-16880-16890-16900-16910-16920-16930-16940-16950-16960-16970-16980-16990-17000-17010-17020-17030-17040-17050-17060-17070-17080-17090-17100-17110-17120-17130-17140-17150-17160-17170-17180-17190-17200-17210-17220-17230-17240-17250-17260-17270-17280-17290-17300-17310-17320-17330-17340-17350-17360-17370-17380-17390-17400-17410-17420-17430-17440-17450-17460-17470-17480-17490-17500-17510-17520-17530-17540-17550-17560-17570-17580-17590-17600-17610-17620-17630-17640-17650-17660-17670-17680-17690-17700-17710-17720-17730-17740-17750-17760-17770-17780-17790-17800-17810-17820-17830-17840-17850-17860-17870-17880-17890-17900-17910-17920-17930-17940-17950-17960-17970-17980-17990-18000-18010-18020-18030-18040-18050-18060-18070-18080-18090-18100-18110-18120-18130-18140-18150-18160-18170-18180-18190-18200-18210-18220-18230-18240-18250-18260-18270-18280-18290-18300-18310-18320-18330-18340-18350-18360-18370-18380-18390-18400-18410-18420-18430-18440-18450-18460-18470-18480-18490-18500-18510-18520-18530-18540-18550-18560-18570-18580-18590-18600-18610-18620-18630-18640-18650-18660-18670-18680-18690-18700-18710-18720-18730-18740-18750-18760-18770-18780-18790-18800-18810-18820-18830-18840-18850-18860-18870-18880-18890-18900-18910-18920-18930-18940-18950-18960-18970-18980-18990-19000-19010-19020-19030-19040-19050-19060-19070-19080-19090-19100-19110-19120-19130-19140-19150-19160-19170-19180-19190-19200-19210-19220-19230-19240-19250-19260-19270-19280-19290-19300-19310-19320-19330-19340-19350-19360-19370-19380-19390-19400-19410-19420-19430-19440-19450-19460-19470-19480-19490-19500-19510-19520-19530-19540-19550-19560-19570-19580-19590-19600-19610-19620-19630-19640-19650-19660-19670-19680-19690-19700-19710-19720-19730-19740-19750-19760-19770-19780-19790-19800-19810-19820-19830-19840-19850-19860-19870-19880-19890-19900-19910-19920-19930-19940-19950-19960-19970-19980-19990-20000-20010-20020-20030-20040-20050-20060-20070-20080-20090-20100-20110-20120-20130-20140-20150-20160-20170-20180-20190-20200-20210-20220-20230-20240-20250-20260-20270-20280-20290-20300-20310-20320-20330-20340-20350-20360-20370-20380-20390-20400-20410-20420-20430-20440-20450-20460-20470-20480-20490-20500-20510-20520-20530-20540-20550-20560-20570-20580-20590-20600-20610-20620-20630-20640-20650-20660-20670-20680-20690-20700-20710-20720-20730-20740-20750-20760-20770-20780-20790-20800-20810-20820-20830-20840-20850-20860-20870-20880-20890-20900-20910-20920-20930-20940-20950-20960-20970-20980-20990-21000-21010-21020-21030-21040-21050-21060-21070-21080-21090-21100-21110-21120-21130-21140-21150-21160-21170-21180-21190-21200-21210-21220-21230-21240-21250-21260-21270-21280-21290-21300-21310-21320-21330-21340-21350-21360-21370-21380-21390-21400-21410-21420-21430-21440-21450-21460-21470-21480-21490-21500-21510-21520-21530-21540-21550-21560-21570-21580-21590-21600-21610-21620-21630-21640-21650-21660-21670-21680-21690-21700-21710-21720-21730-21740-21750-21760-21770-21780-21790-21800-21810-21820-21830-21840-21850-21860-21870-21880-2







## The House that Eva Built

### The House of Peace

Sula is about multiplicity, complexity, about multiple selves and extremes of spirit. About awareness of self and creation of identity. The novel bears the name of one character but it is about the life and death of a whole community. About women and their relationships and about their choices. About the ability to be the precursor of good and evil. And about not knowing or caring about which or whose side you are on. The reader too is in a dilemma, aware that he or she cannot be too quick to judge .

The architecture of Sula reveals these contradictions, these complexities and multiplicities, these blurrings and confusions.

*Sula Peace lived in a house of many rooms that had been built over a period of five years to the specifications of the owner, who kept on adding things: more stairways, there were three sets to the second floor — more rooms, doors and stoops. There were rooms that had three doors, others that opened out on the porch only and were in accessible from any other part of the house; others that you could get to only by going through somebody's bedroom. The creator and sovereign of this enormous house with four sickle pears in the front yard and the single elm in the back yard was Eva Peace, who sat in a wagon on the third floor directing the lives of her children, friends, strays, and a constant stream of boarders.*

### Notes

hierarchy and trinity

Eva, Hannah Sula

Biblical names (Sula derivation of the name of an hermaphroditic African goddess)

However Morrison says she choose the name because of its commonness so that people might see Sula more as the woman down the street Sula-Mae.

### SeboULisA

Hierarchy etc. suggests an architecture in classical sense that would draw on the classical motif of trabeation and the triumphal arch.



There is a sequence in the novel that begins to chart a possible plan for the house. This sequence forms a core around which the rest of the house might be configured.

There are of course many possible configurations and the aim is not to find the single possibility but to manifest the multiplicity of the text and its characters by the multiplicity and the possible complexity and configurations of the plan.

However this sequence can suggest that there is a core, a heart a soul to the house, much in the same way that there is a core to these characters and it is the point that they come to know themselves.

In the hey day of the house and at the height of Eva's reign the house is full of people and the community is strong in its traditions whether they be as obscure as national suicide day or as sure as Hannah Peace having sex with your man.

The house is conceived internally, from within. Aside from the description of the sickle pear trees in the front yard as Boy boy's girl friend leaned against the tree in her pea green dress and loud city laugh, There is really no description of the house from the exterior. Again this is tied to the importance of the discovery of one self. Hannah's exterior appearance as well as Sula's denied the effect that they had on the community. However Sula did have a mark as did Eva indicative of their uniqueness.

The house has a section which is as complicated as its plan, however beyond its enormity it has no elevation.

27.05.96

Symbolically Eva should have the top floor to herself. Balcony offers access to the outside world. Would like to think somehow that from her room she could look down on all that was hers.

Right away some problems — Drawings show house conceived as a single continuous entity. Rather the house conceived /built in a more piecemeal fashion. Necessary to think of house in discontinuous fragments. However there must be an understood core, for the house was built and then added onto. Also consider that Eva had money so that she could afford to create this edifice.

Stairs are revealed as a significant architectural element. Eva lived on the third floor at the top of the house where she chose to retire to after her meeting with Boyboy. There are three sets of steps to the second floor, important in contradiction or opposition to the fact that when Eva created the house she had only one

leg.

Stairs are also important in *Beloved*. Baby Suggs was pleased and proud to discover that her new home was two storeys even though with a bad hip she would never be able to climb the stairs.

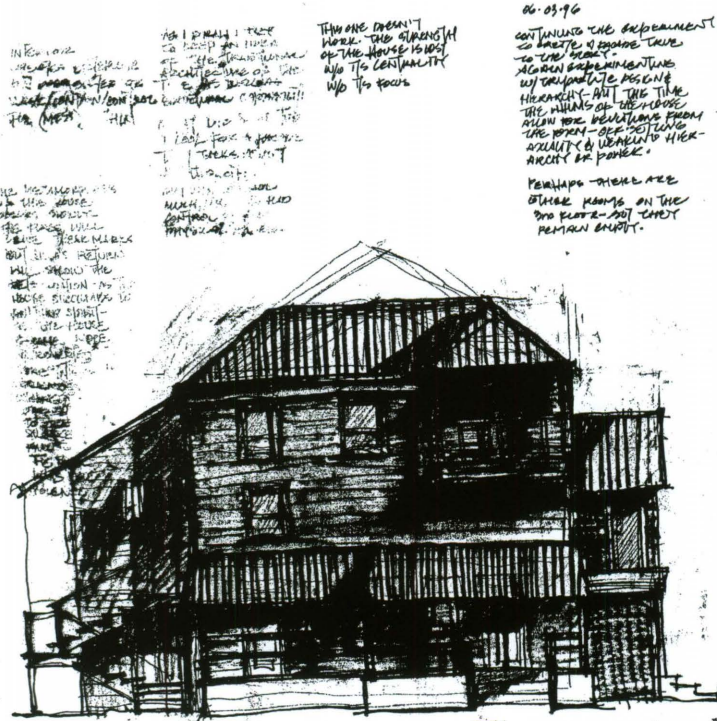
The significance of the stairs increases with their transformation to "lightning white" so that the crawling-already-baby could see, to be able to climb them.

No Backdoor. In *Beloved* the back door is boarded up. Baby Suggs says if some one wants to come in they have to go through her. At the same time it emphasises how in some ways the women are trapped in a home that is also a prison.

Back window in Eva's room boarded up after the death of Hannah, and after Eva had jumped out of it.

Pilates house also has no back door.





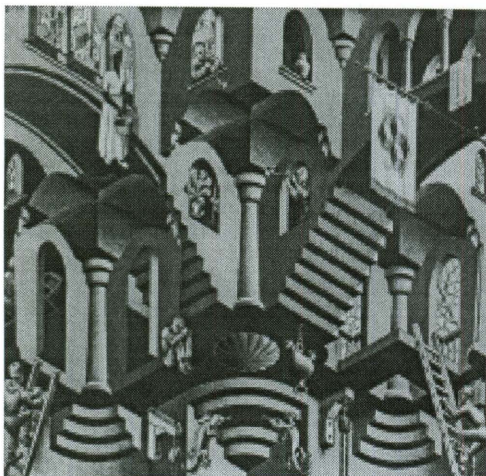
The creator and sovereign of this enormous house



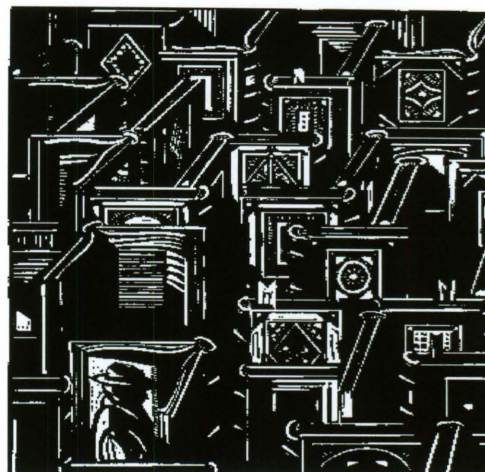
Louise Fucron is the creator of this house. Photograph taken by Beverly Buchanan



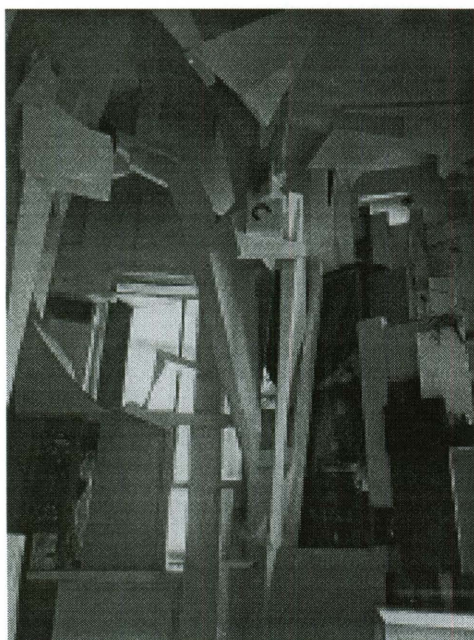




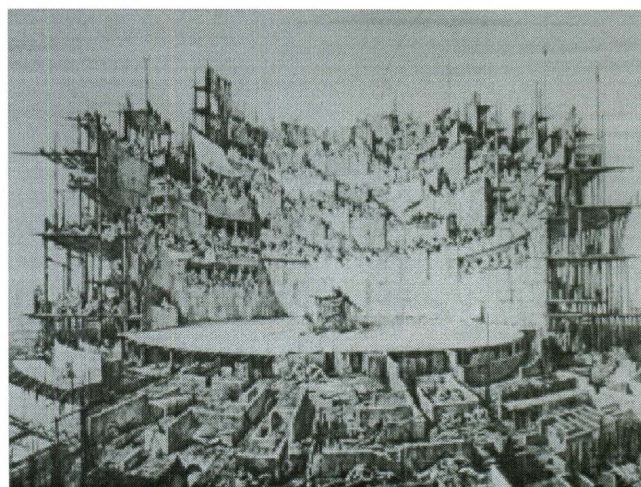
M.C. Escher



Stephen Alcorn



Kurt Schwitters, Merzbau

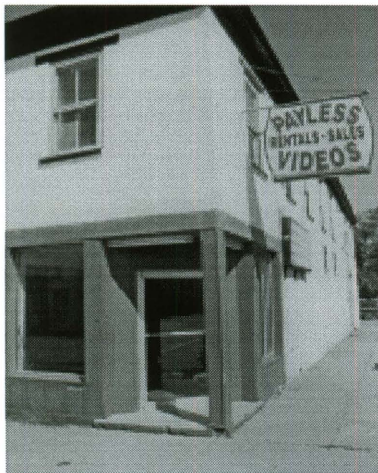
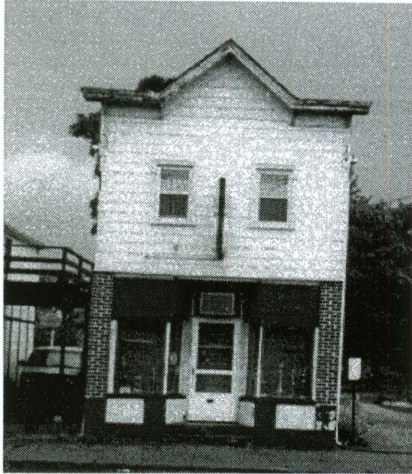


Fabrizio Cleric, The Minatour in the Labyrinth

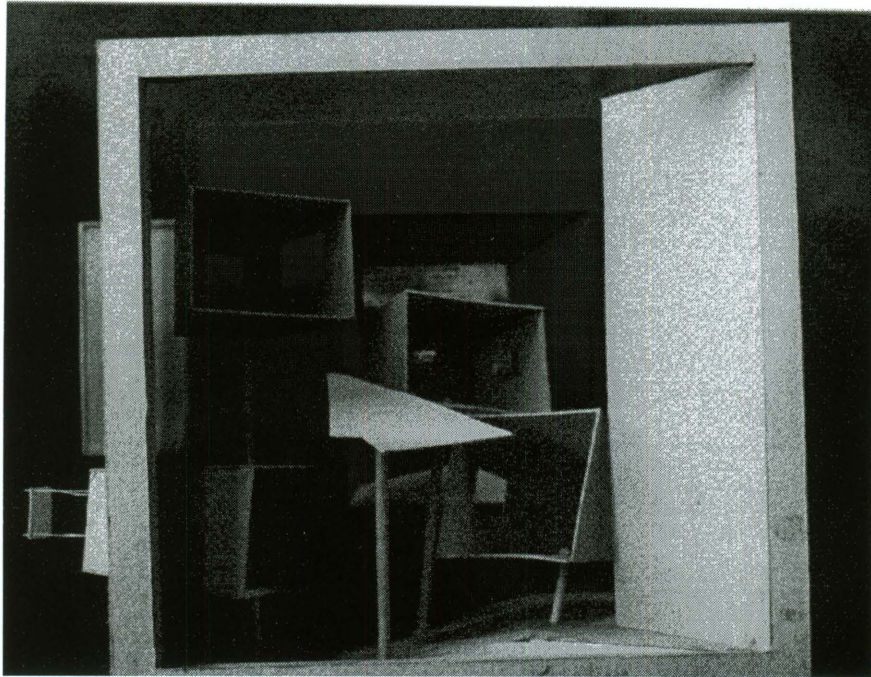


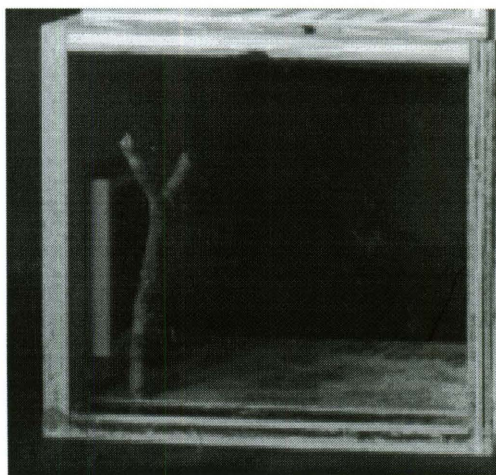
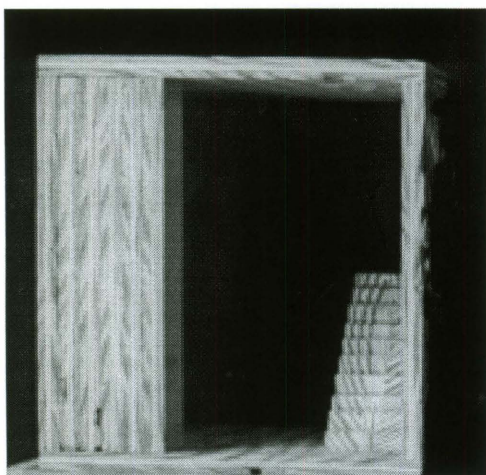
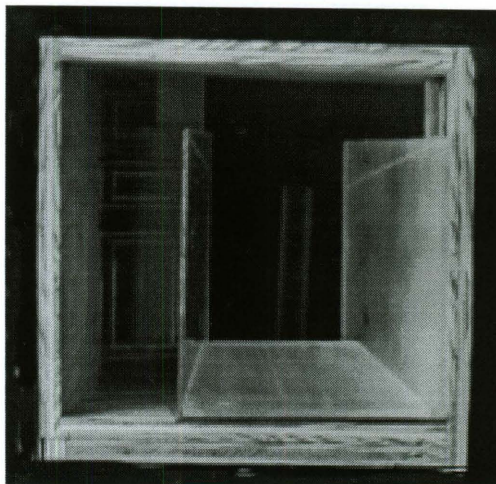
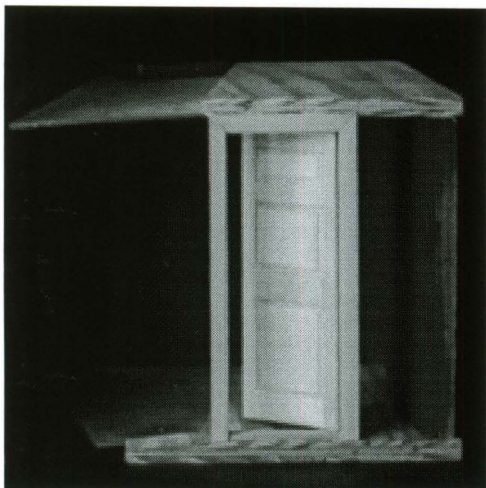






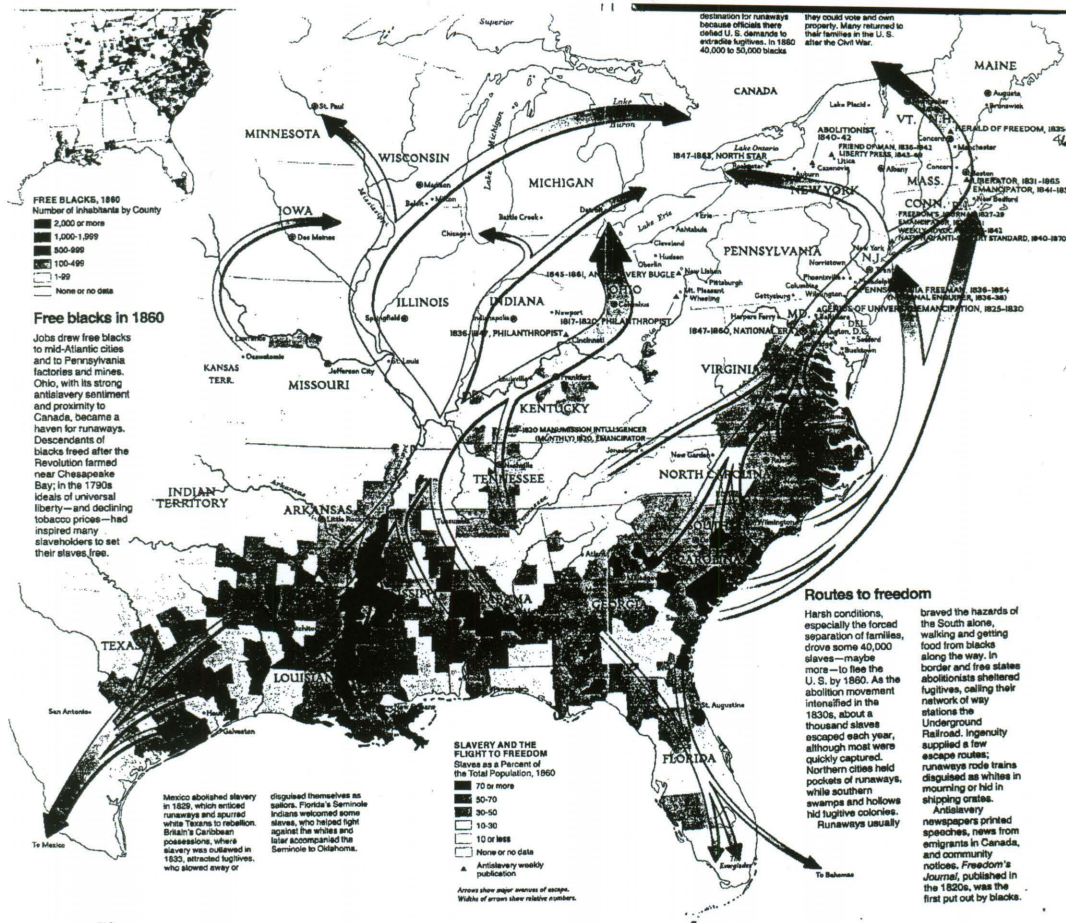








site as threshold

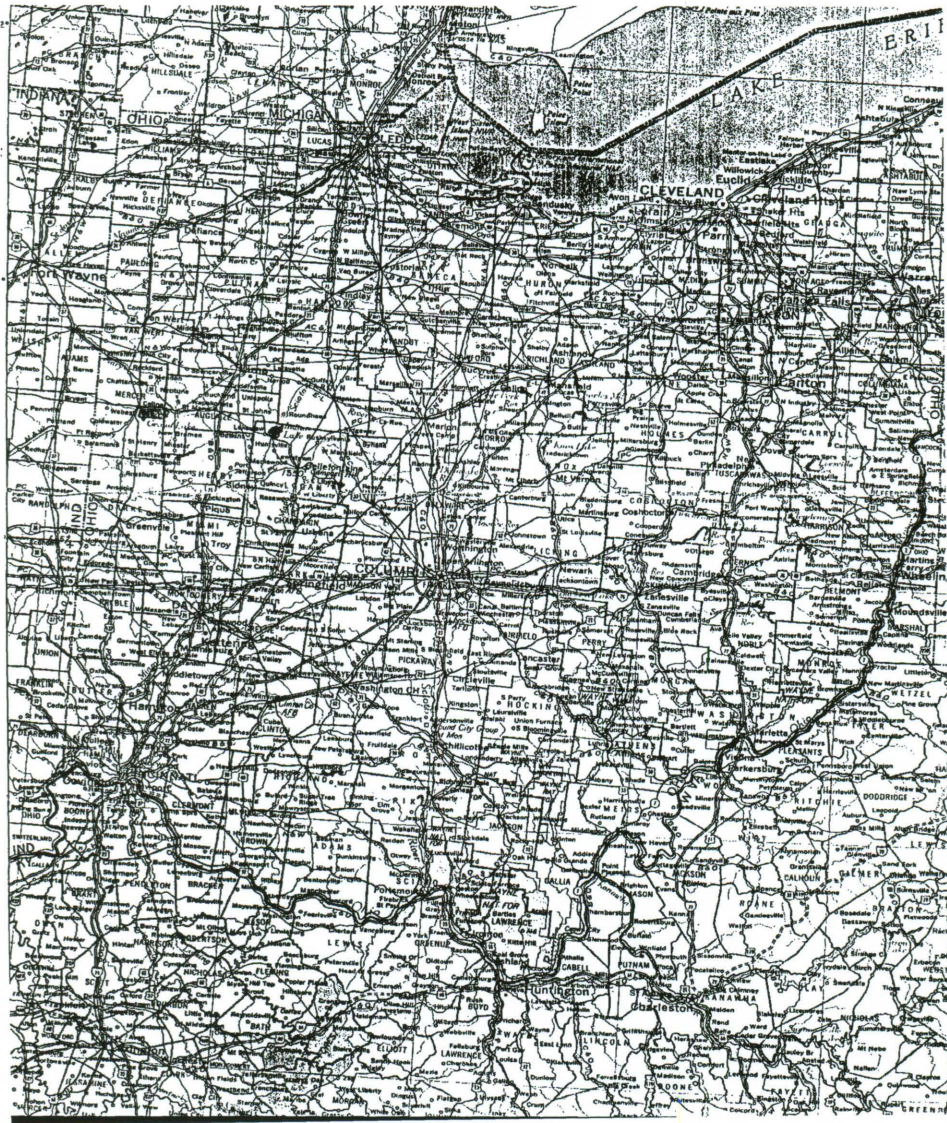


The journey to freedom takes slaves from the southern regions of the USA to the freedom of the north. Ohio known as the front porch of Canada and freedom was therefore a state of refuge for the runaway slave. With the Ohio River at the south and Lake Erie to the north, crossing each body of water brought one closer to freedom.

Ohio thus can be perceived as a threshold, as a zone of transition, a point of delay where things—slow down.



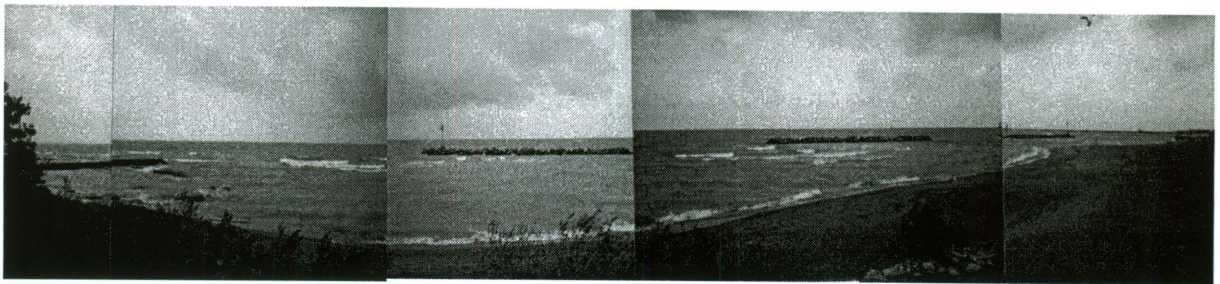
## site as threshold



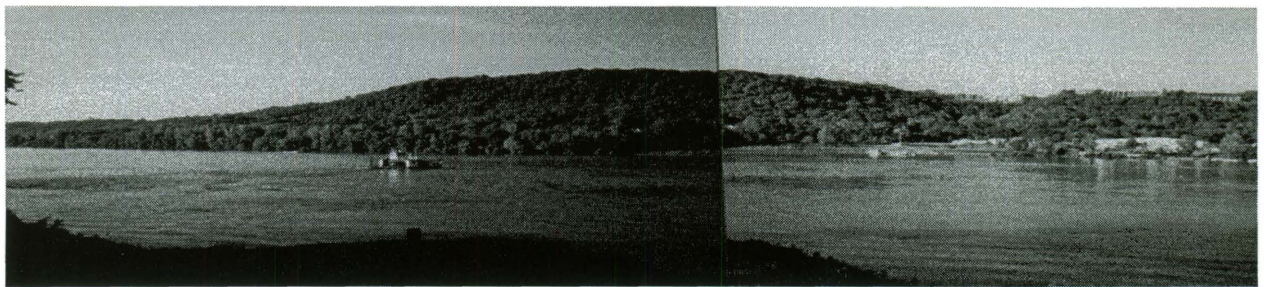
Morrison was born and grew up in Lorain, Ohio, on the shores of Lake Erie. Lorain was the site of her first novel Bluest Eye. Cincinnati and its environs, were the setting for Beloved and Sula. Song of Solomon, is set in another northern state, most likely Michigan. However the large body of water is an important symbol in in all the novels. Interpreted as a definer of threshold in this thesis, lakes, river and sea become important sites and registers of zones of transition and delay.



site as threshold

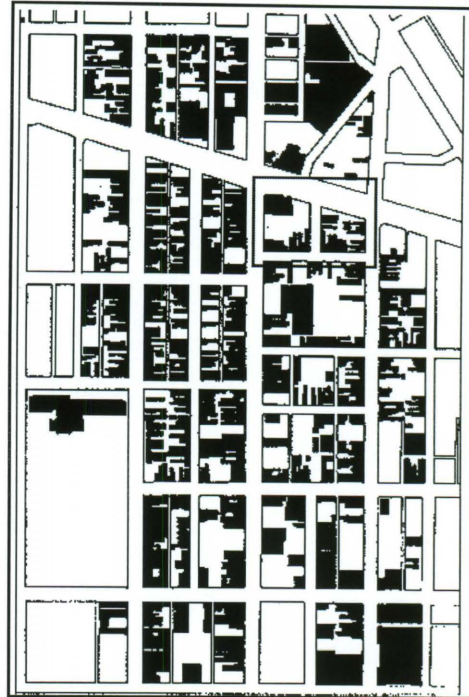


Lake Erie



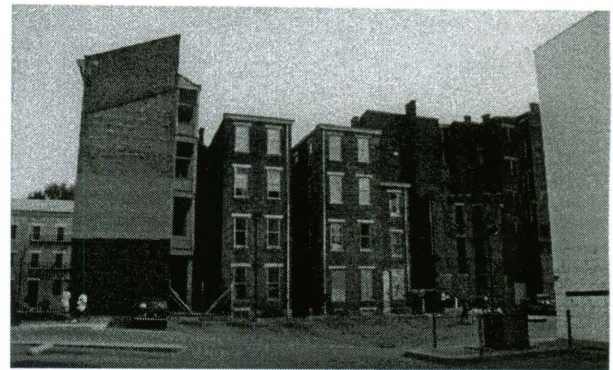
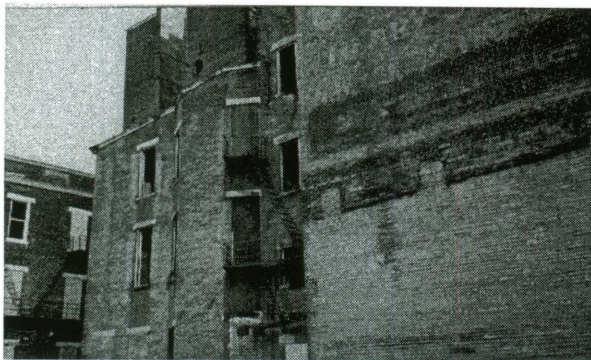
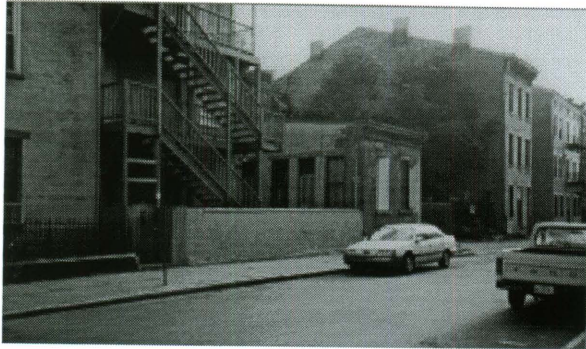
Ohio River

site as threshold



Cincinnati's Over The Rhine was the home of the city's german immigrant population, during the 1800s. On the northern side of the canal on the edge of the city and just before the rising highland, this portion of Cincinnati can be conceived as a zone of transition. The architecture of the area is dominated by what are described as german hotels. These tall row house type buildings supported several families at a time. Eventually the families would move out of the hotels and the neighbourhood as their fortunes improved. Today the Over the Rhine region is populated mainly by African-Americans and Hispanics. Now these hotels have become permanent residences and in a sense these zones of transitions are now traps where-in time has slowed and there appears no escape.

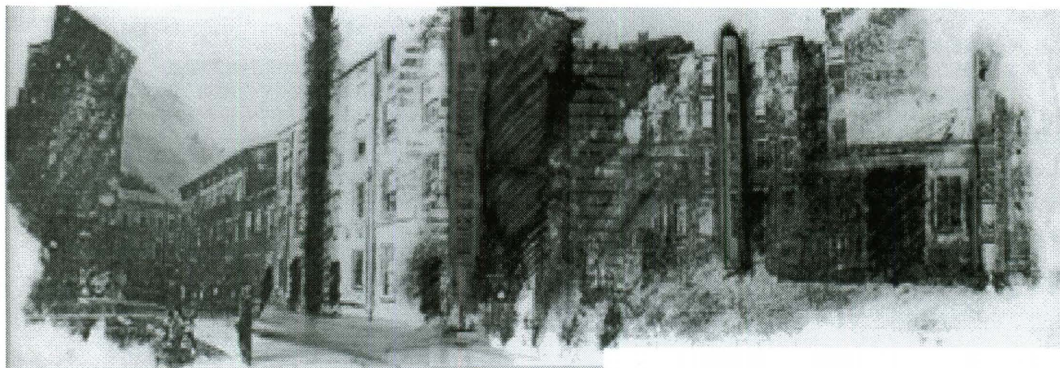
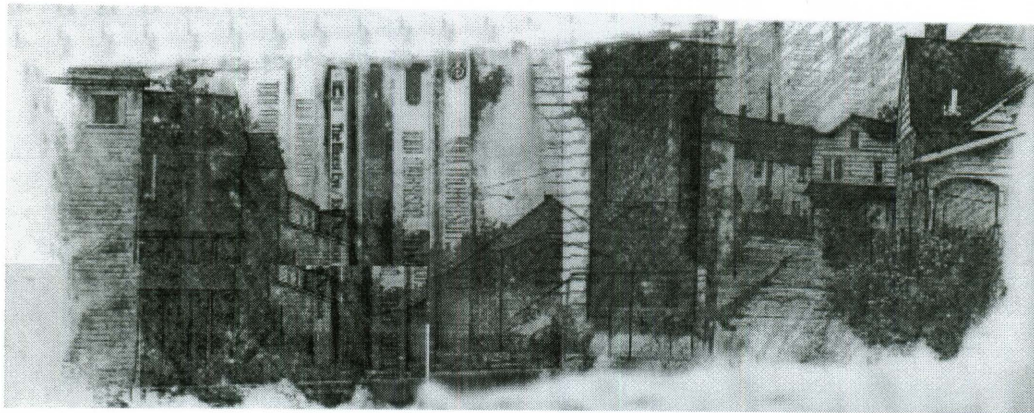




Images of Over the Rhine



site as threshold



conceptual site drawings



[illegible]

The site of architectural intervention is the space between buildings. Existing as a zone of transition through its use as fire exits, the alley way fulfils the criterion for threshold as a space between, a point of crossing, as a thickened boundary.

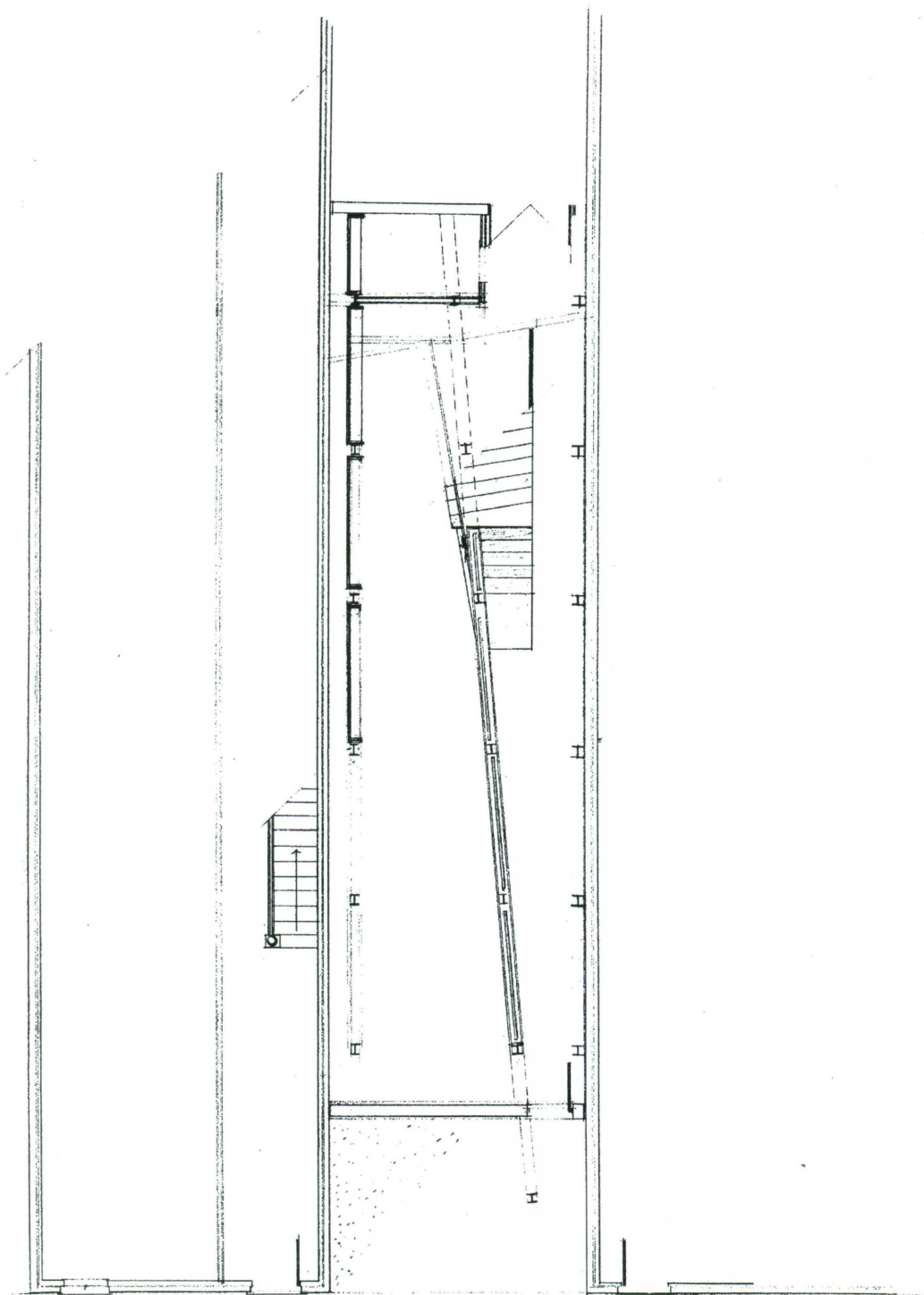
### The Project

The Urban Bookstore seeks to explore the concept of threshold as discussed throughout this document. Sandwiched between two buildings, the structure is at the same time part of, yet separate from its hosts. Movement throughout the building explores the concept of threshold, of its thickening and the idea of delay. The longitudinal section explores the thickening of threshold as a series of horizontal bands which mimic the wall of the existing building, which is the original threshold and point of entry. The concept of delay as it relates to threshold is manifest in the reading boxes. Here threshold is more of a zone and the act of passing through is slowed down or thickened to the point that there is an actual halt of movement.

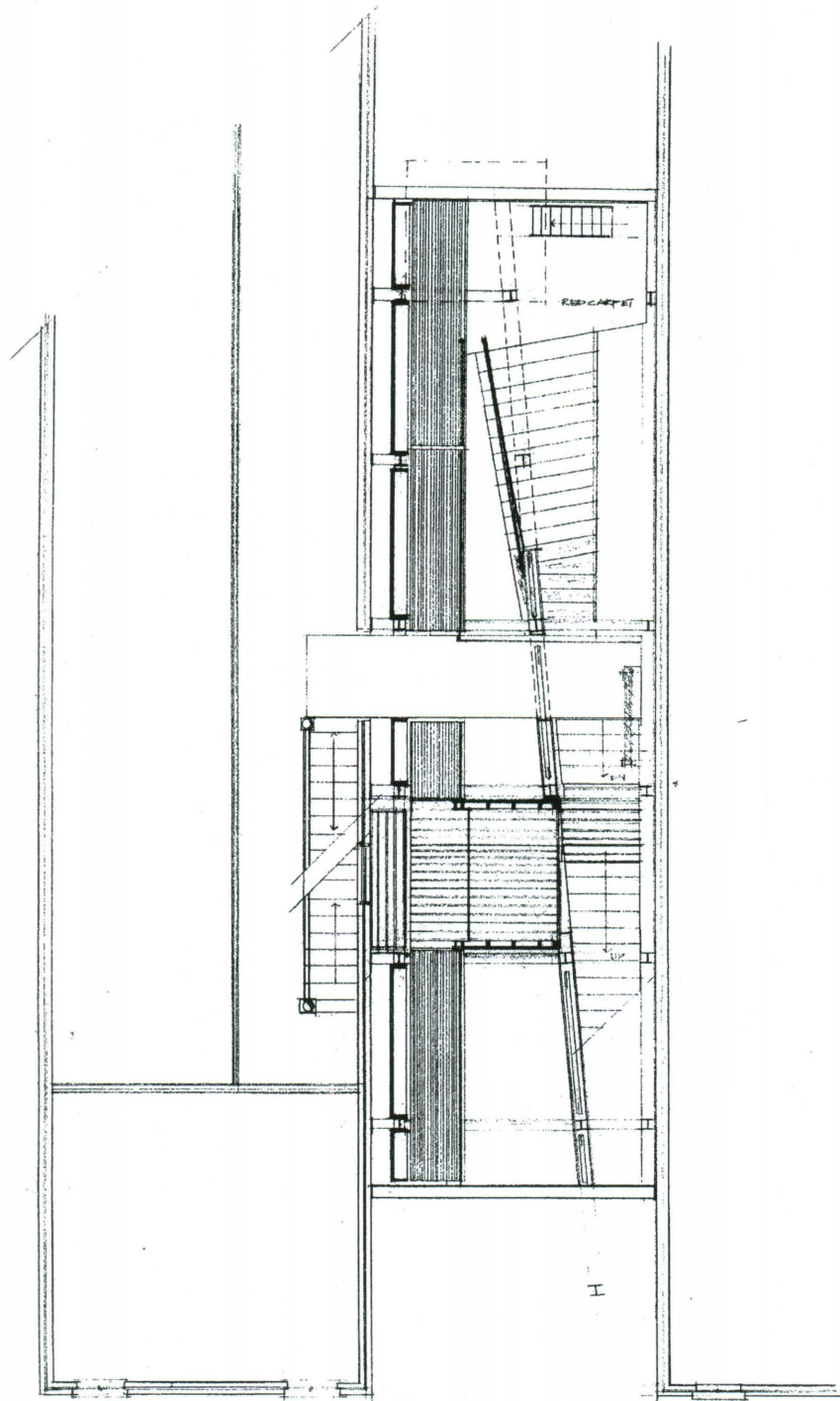
The verticality of the building is of course a product of the site. However movement through the building visually and physically has a strong vertical dimension that plays upon the idea of the transitional space and the idea of constantly moving through.

There is an intent in the design for a strong sense of materiality. This is much more an influence of the nature of the novels themselves than it is a conceptualizing of the ideas of threshold. Describing Morrison's fiction and architecture as gritty, speaks of an awareness of nature and an appreciation for what is natural. The building attempts to keep one in awareness of self, through place, through the use of materials, (almost heavy-handed at times in the singularity of the material). Wood, metal and glass and light are used throughout the building, to create differing effects, in order to permit a narrative of the building to be read.



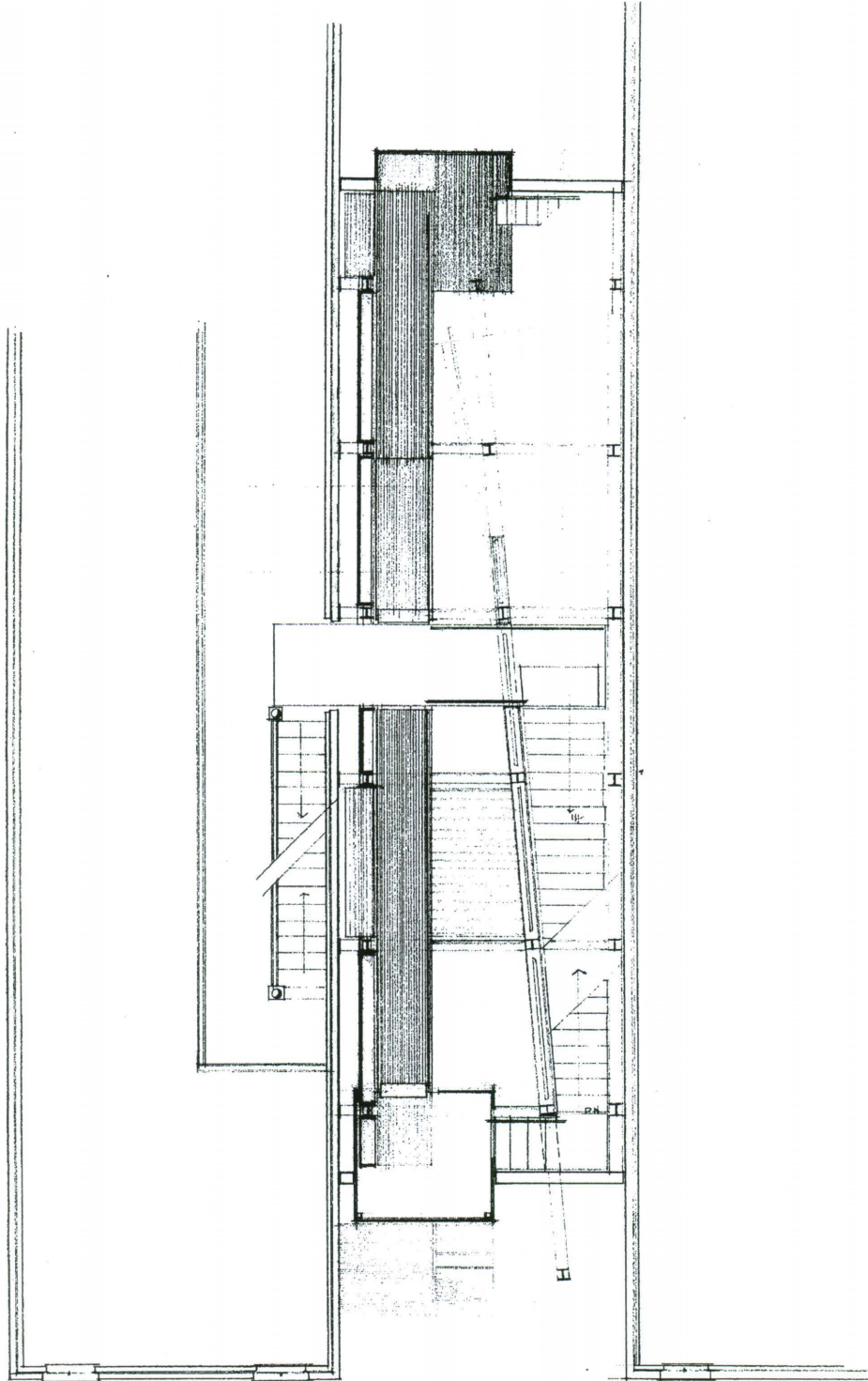


First floor Plan

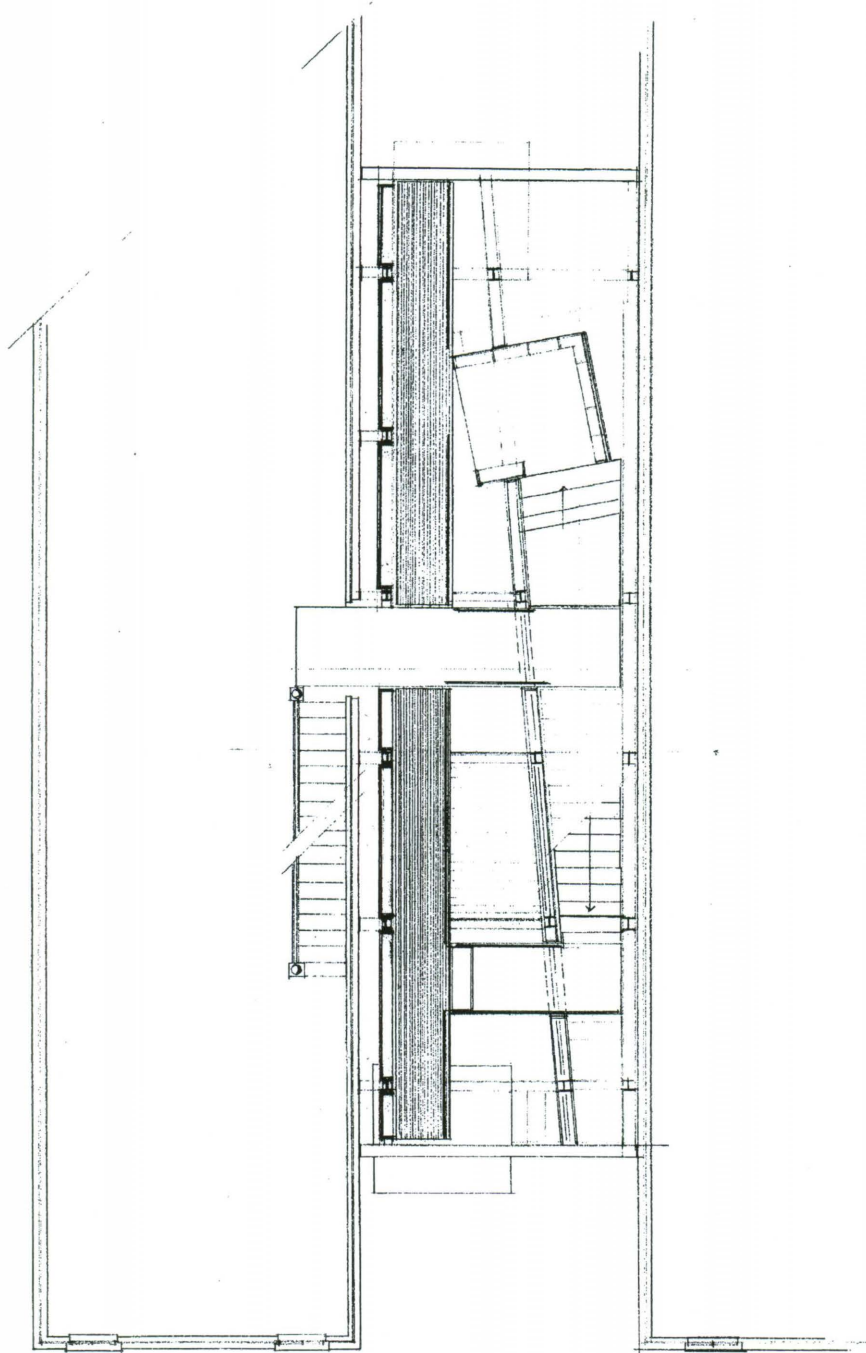


Second floor plan



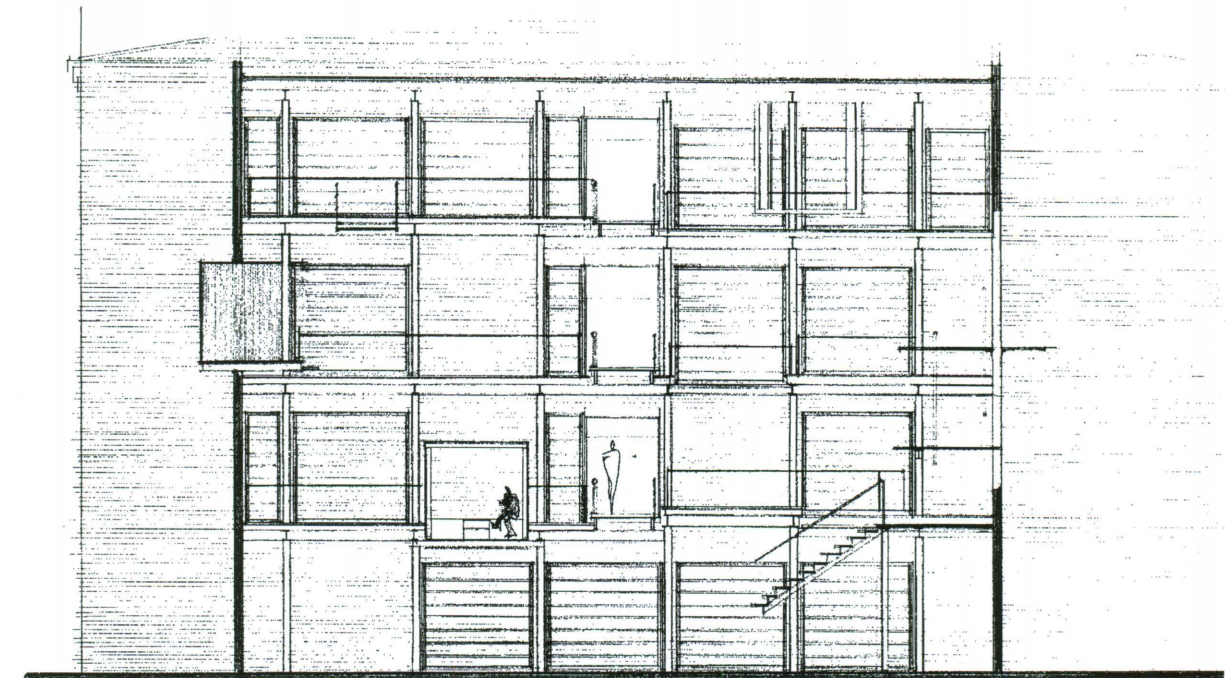


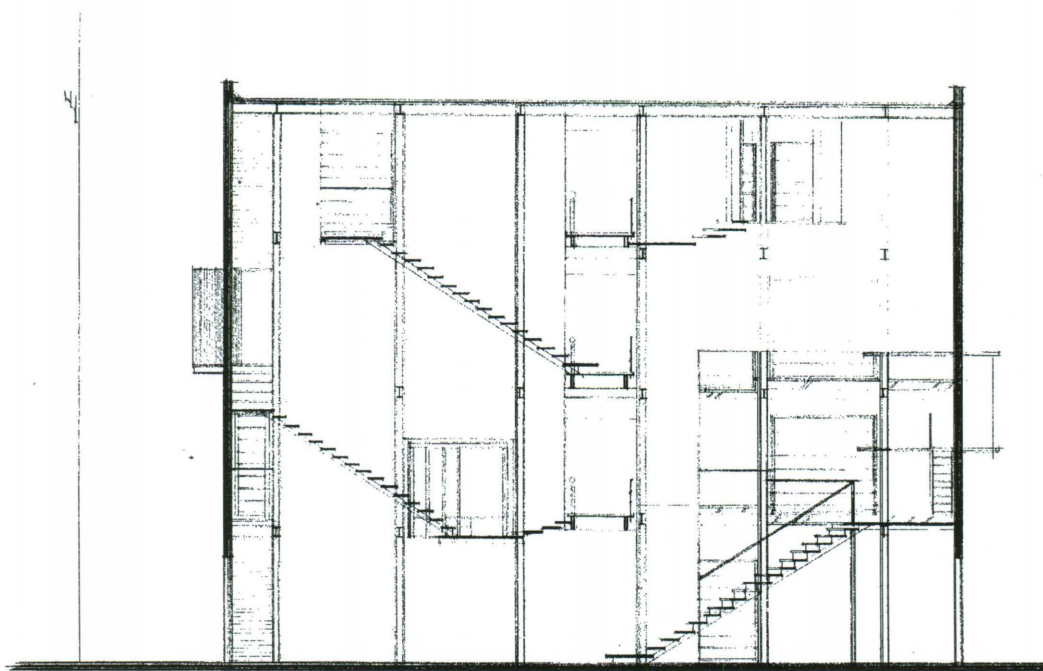
Third Floor plan



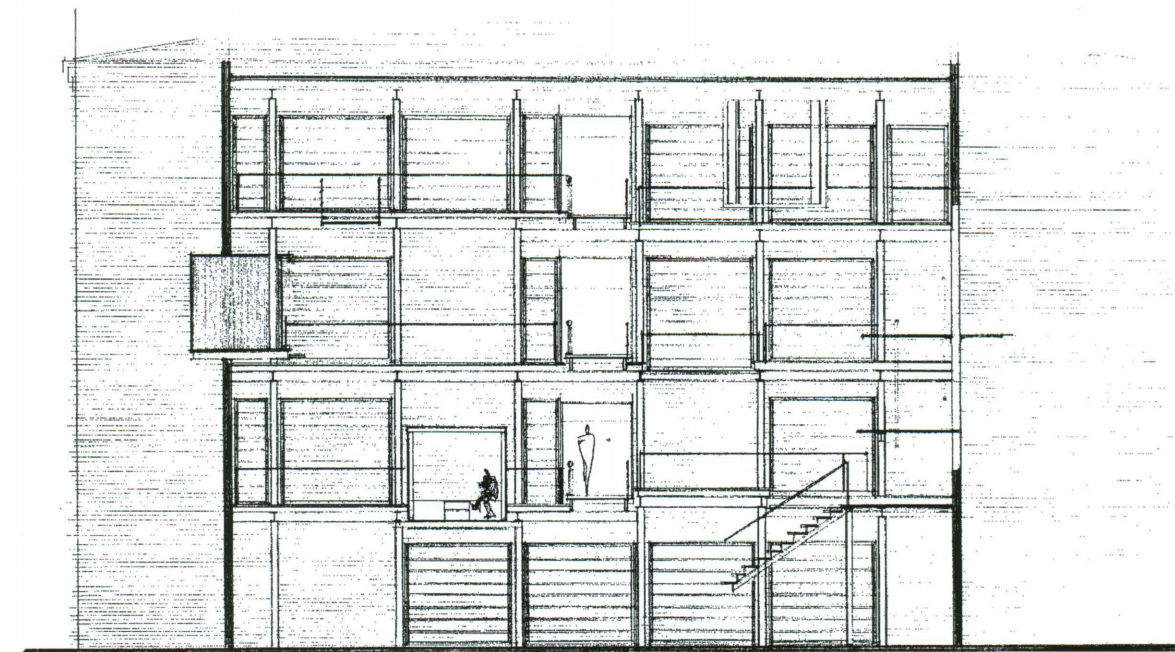
Fourth Floor Plan

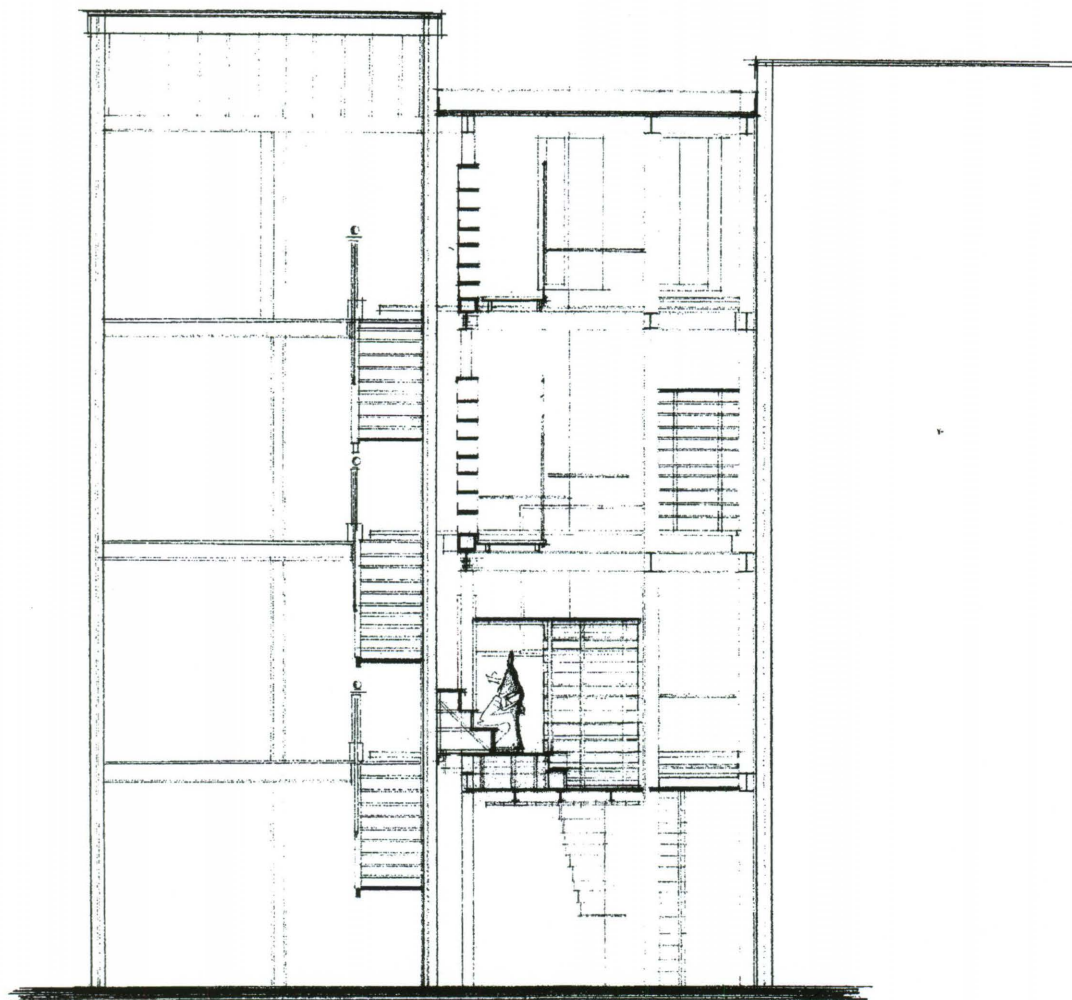




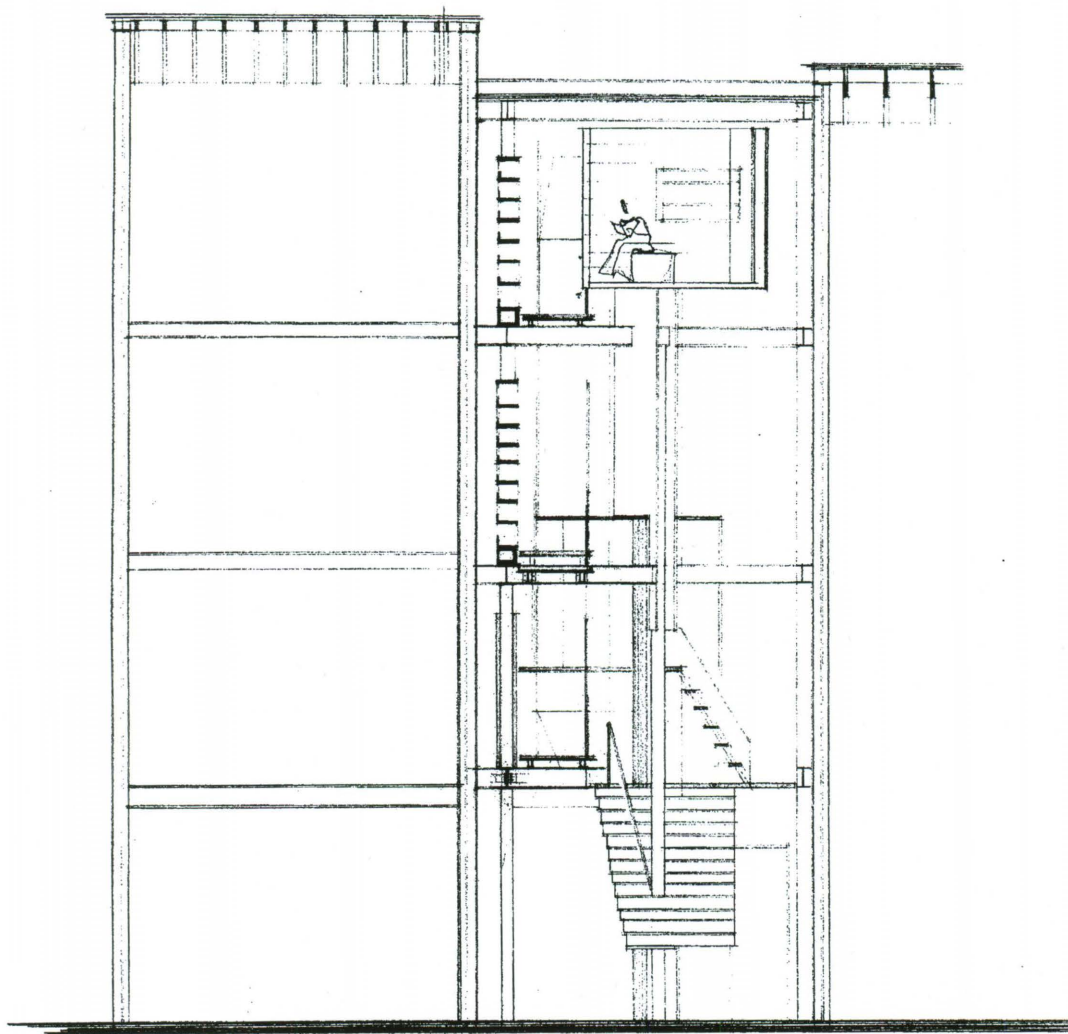


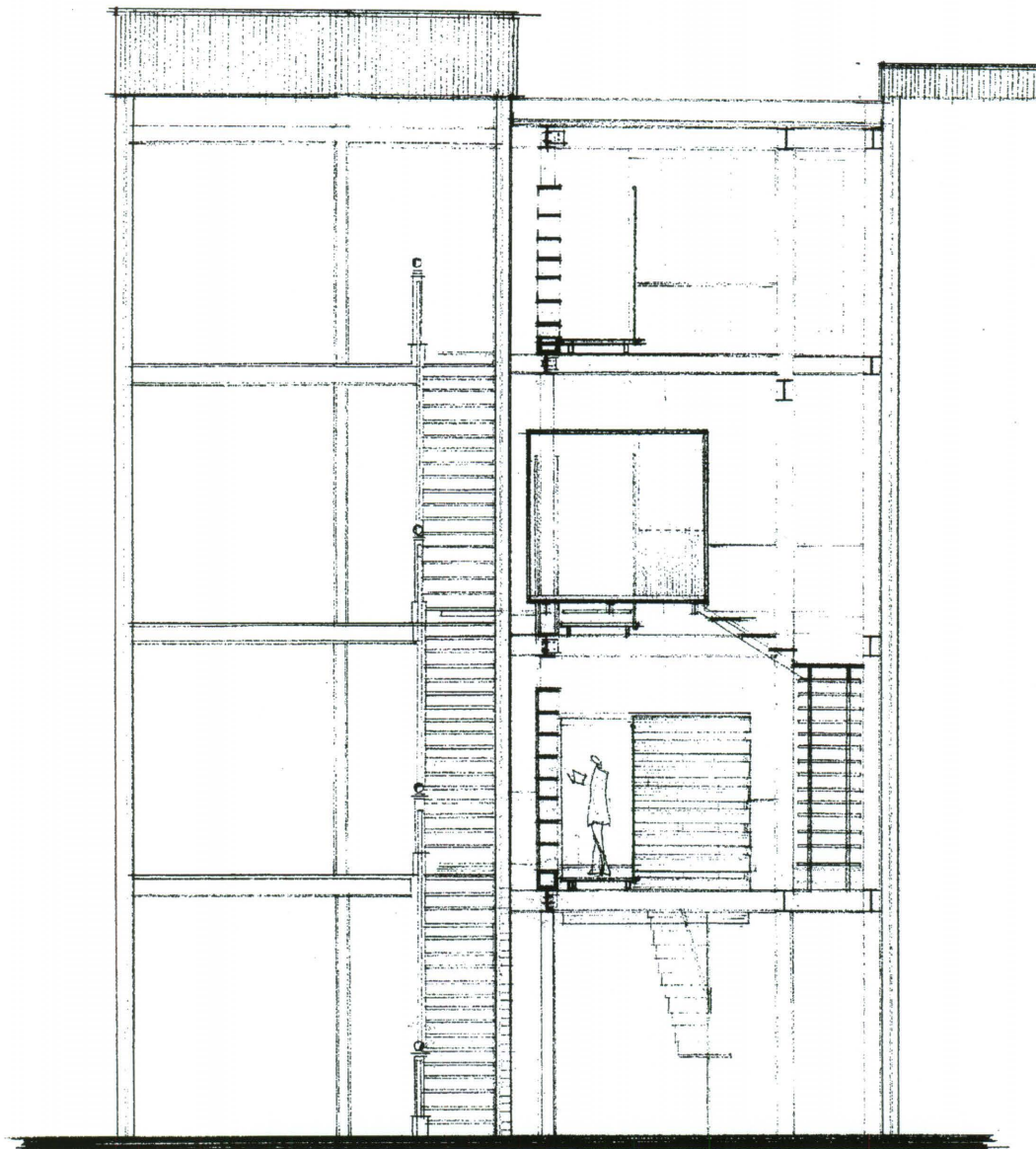




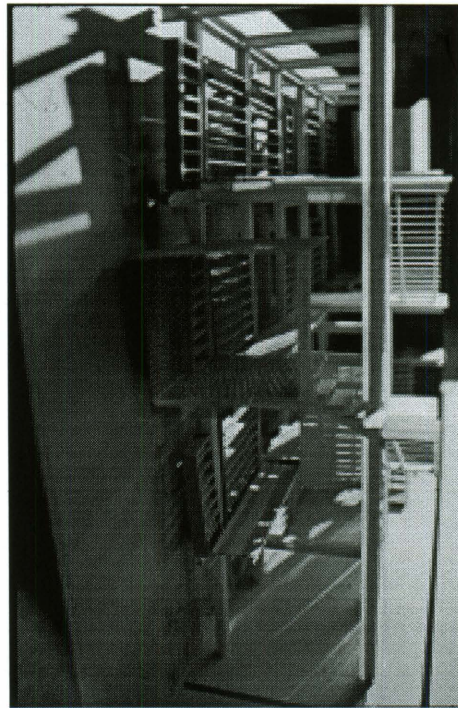
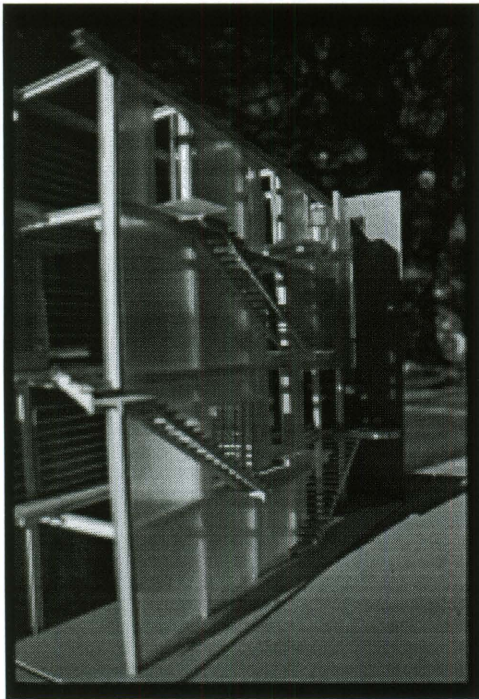
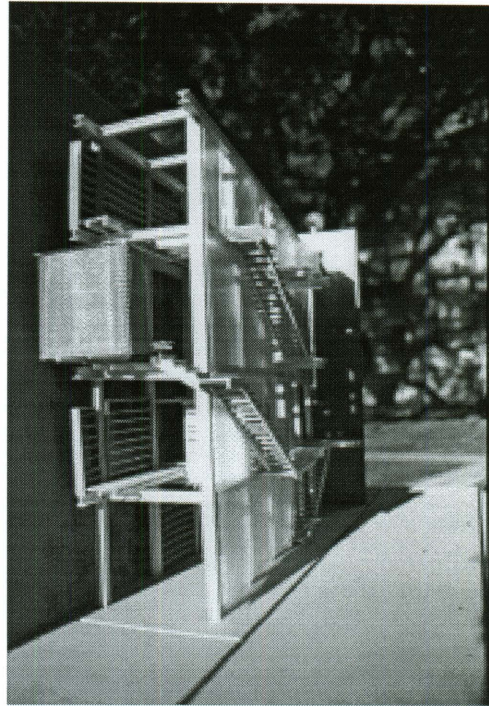




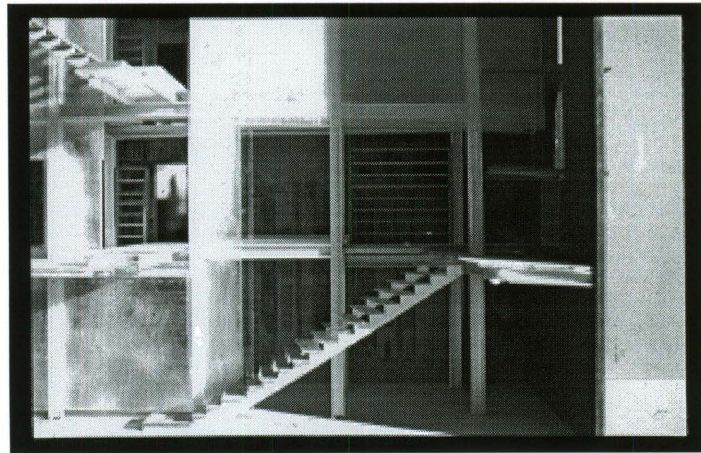
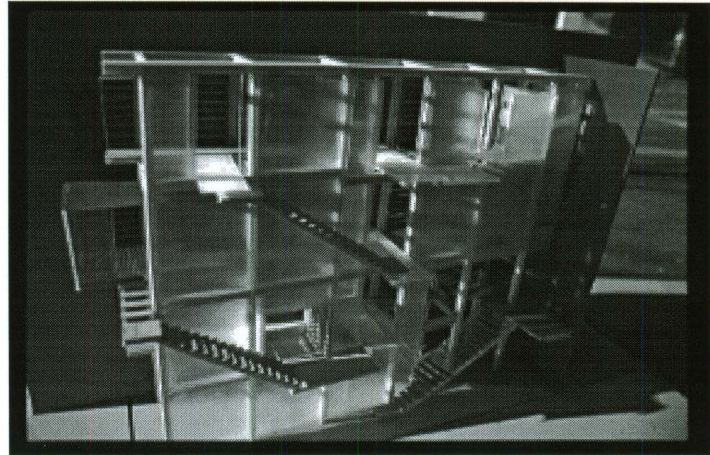






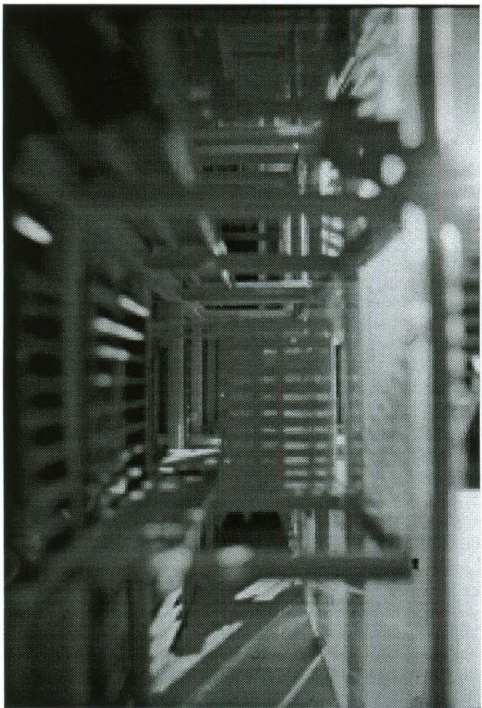














## **Bibliography**

- Bailly, Jean -Christophe.** *Kurt Schwitters*. Edition Hazan Paris 1993.
- Balakian, Anna.** *Surrealism: the road to the absolute*. Chicago London University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- Bloom, Harold** ed. *Toni Morrison Modern Critical Views*. New York Philadelphia Chelsea House Publishers, 1990.
- Brown, Stewart.** *Caribbean New Wave Contemporary Short Stories*. London Heinemann, 1990.
- Carter, Thomas and Herman, Bernard** ed. *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* III Columbia London University of Missouri Press, 1982.
- Carter, Thomas and Herman, Bernard** ed. *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* IV Columbia London University of Missouri Press, 1982.
- Chandler, Marilyn.** *Dwelling in the Text: Houses in American Fiction*. Berkeley Los Angeles Oxford University of California Press.
- Cromley, Elizabeth Collins and Hudgins, Carter L** ed. *Gender, Class and Shelter; Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture V*. Knoxville University of Tennessee Press, 1982.
- de Weever Jacqueline.** *Myth-Making and Metaphor in Black Women's Fiction*. St Martin's Press New York, 1991.
- Eisenman, Peter.** *The End of the Classical: The End of the Beginning, the End of the End*. Perspecta 21, 1984.
- Fardjadi, Homa.** *Delayed Space: work of Homa Fardjadi and Mohsen Mostafavi*. Cambridge Massachusetts Harvard University School of Design; N Y Princeton Architectural Press, 1994.
- Foster, Hal .** *Compulsive Beauty*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, MIT Press, 1993.
- Heinze, Denise.** *The Dilemma of "Double-consciousness" Toni Morrison's novels*. Athens University of Georgia Press, 1993.
- Herscher, Georges.** *Victor Hugo, dessinateur*. Paris, Editions du Minotaure, 1964.
- Hurston, Zora Neale.** *Their Eyes were Watching God*. Urbana and Chicago University of Illinois Press, 1978.
- Hutslar, Donald A.** *The Architecture of Migration: Log Construction in the Ohio Country 1750-1850*. Ohio University Press, Athens Ohio, 1986.
- Lerup, Lars.** *Planned Assaults*. Montreal Centre Canadien d'Architecture, 1987.
- Levy, Helen Fiddymment.** *Fiction of the Home Place; Jewell, Cather, Glasgow, Porter, Welty & Naylor*. Jackson London University Press of Mississippi, 1992.
- Locher, J.L.** ed. *M.C. Escher His Life and Complete Graphic Work*. Harry N. Abrams Inc. Pub. New York 1981.
- Lord, James.** *Giacometti: A biography*. New York Farrar Straus Giroux, 1985
- Marshall, Paule.** *Brown Girl, Brownstones*. New Jersey Chatham Bookseller, 1972.
- McShine, Kynaston** ed. *Joseph Cornell* Museum of Modern Art , New York 1980
- Morrison, Toni.** *Beloved*. New York Plume Book Penguin Group, 1988.
- Morrison, Toni.** *Song Of Solomon*. New York Plume Book Penguin Group, 1987.
- Morrison, Toni.** *Sula*. New York Ontario A Plume Book New American Library, 1982.

**Morrison, Toni.** *The Bluest Eye.* New York London Washington Square Press, 1972

**Morrison, Toni.** *Unspeakable things Unspoken: The Afro -American Presence in American Literature*

**Naylor, Gloria.** *Mama Day.* New York Vintage Books Random House, 1989.

**Norberg-Schulz, Christian.** *Existence, Space & Architecture.* New York Praeger Publishers, 1971.

**Scruggs, Charles.** *Sweet Home: Invisible Cities in the Afro-American Novel.* Baltimore London Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

**Shepherd, Elizabeth** ed. *Secrets, dialogues, revelations: The Art of Betye and Alison Saar* Los Angeles: High Art Gallery, University of California, c 1990.

**Southall, Thomas W.** *Of Time and Place: Walker Evans and William Christenberry* San Francisco Calif. : Friends of Photography: Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum; Albuquerque: In association with the University of New Mexico Press, 1990.

**Taylor-Guthrie, Danille** ed. *Conversations with Toni Morrison.* University Press of Mississippi, 1994.

**Upton, Dell and Vlach, Michael** ed. *Common Place: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture.* Georgia University of Georgia Press, 1986.

**Vidler, Anthony.** *The Architectural Uncanny Essays in the Modern Unhomely.* Cambridge